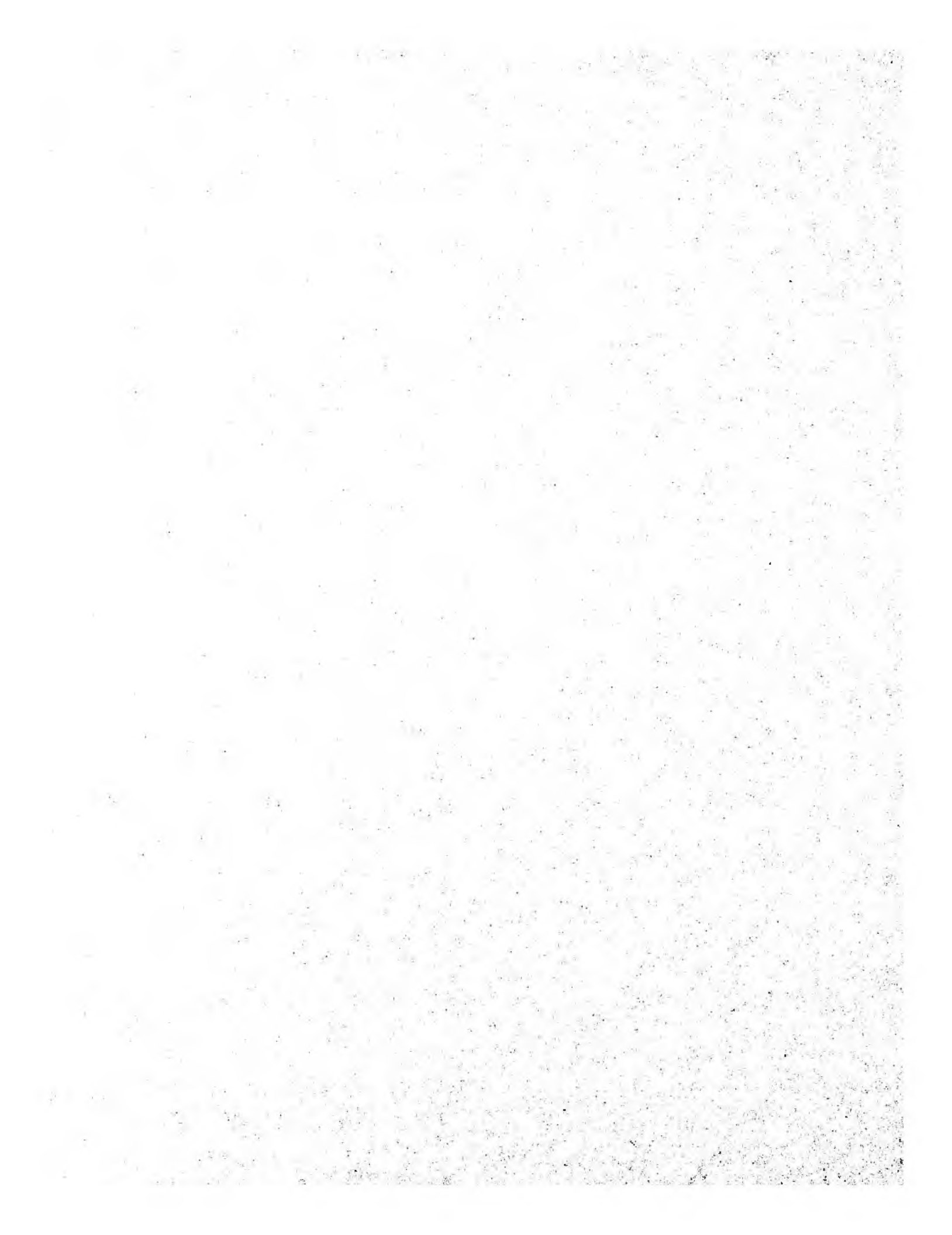


IMAM AL-ṬAḤĀWĪ'S
CREED
of
ISLAM
AN EXPOSITION



Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī

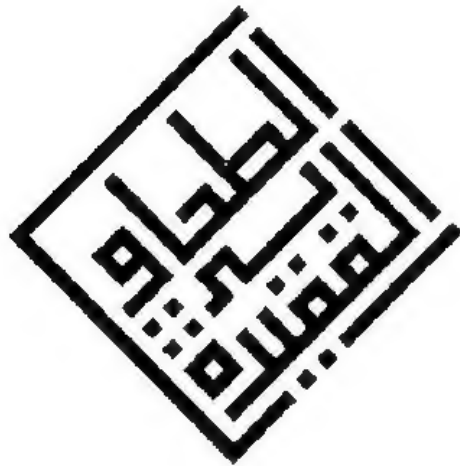
*Translated and Annotated by
Amjad Mahmood*





IMAM AL-TAḤĀWĪ'S
CREED *of* ISLAM

IMAM AL-ṬAḤĀWĪ'S
CREED
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ISLAM
AN EXPOSITION



Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī

*Translated and Annotated by
Amjad Mahmood*



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P R E S S

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CONTENTS



Transliteration Key	viii
Translator's Introduction	ix
Imam Abū Ja'far al-Ṭahāwī	xiv
Imam Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī	xvii
Author's Introduction	xix
1 Exposition of the Creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah	1
2 Divine Unity	7
<i>Exposition of the meaning of divine unity</i>	9
<i>Disagreement on the obligation to know Him Most High</i>	9
<i>Ibrāhīm's method of proving Allah's existence</i>	12
<i>The proof of divine unity</i>	17
<i>Allah's eternity</i>	19
<i>Allah's perpetuity</i>	20
<i>Allah's will</i>	21
<i>Allah's dissimilarity to creation</i>	22
<i>Allah's life</i>	24
<i>Allah's self-subsistence</i>	26
3 Allah's Eternal and Everlasting Names and Attributes	29
4 Allah's Preordination	38
<i>Allah's volition</i>	41
5 Muhammad ﷺ and His Description	45
<i>Belief in Muhammad's prophethood</i>	45
<i>Muhammad ﷺ: the Seal of the Prophets</i>	46
<i>Some of the Prophet's virtues and distinctions</i>	47
<i>Universality of the Prophet's message</i>	49
6 The Qur'an: the Eternal Word of Allah	51
7 The Beatific Vision	55

8	The Prophet's Night Journey ﷺ and Ascension	68
9	The Prophet's Basin ﷺ and Intercession	71
10	The Covenant Made with Ādam ﷺ and His Progeny	74
11	Divine Decree and Predetermination	76
12	The Preserved Tablet and the Pen	82
13	Allah's Attribute of Creating	85
14	The Throne and the Footstool	89
15	The Angels, the Prophets and the Revealed Books	92
16	Declaring the People of the Qiblah to be Muslims	94
17	Debating about Allah's Essence	96
18	Arguing about the Qur'an	98
19	The Impermissibility of Accusing a Muslim of Disbelief	101
	<i>Response to the Murj'iah</i>	103
20	The Meaning of Faith	109
21	Faith Neither Increases nor Decreases	112
22	The Fate of Major Sinners	115
23	The Status of a Muslim	120
24	Rebelling Against Muslim Leaders	123
25	Wiping Over Footwear	127
26	Hajj and Jihad	128
27	The Guardian Angels who are Scribes	130
28	The Grave and its States	132
29	Resurrection	135
30	Paradise and Hellfire	139
31	The Ability that Accompanies Acts	142
32	Slaves' Actions	144
33	Supplication and Alms on Behalf of the Deceased	146
34	Allah's Wrath and Pleasure	149
35	Loving the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ	150
36	The Order of the Caliphate	153
37	The Ten Given the Glad Tidings of Paradise	156
38	Speaking Well of Scholars	158
39	The Rank of Sainthood	159
	<i>Miracles of the saints</i>	160
40	Portents of the Final Hour	161

41 Diviners and Soothsayers	162
42 Adhering to the Congregation	164
<i>Conclusion</i>	167
 Index	 170

TRANSLITERATION KEY



•	' (A distinctive glottal stop made at the bottom of the throat.)	ط	ṭ (An emphatic <i>t</i> pronounced behind the front teeth.)
ا	<i>a, ā</i>	ظ	ẓ (An emphatic <i>th</i> , like the <i>th</i> in <i>this</i> , made behind the front teeth.)
ب	<i>b</i>	ع	ʿ (A distinctive Semitic sound made in the middle of the throat, sounding to a Western ear more like a vowel than a consonant.)
ت	<i>t</i>	غ	gh (A guttural sound made at the top of the throat, resembling the untrilled German and French <i>r</i> .)
ث	<i>th</i> (Pronounced like the <i>th</i> in <i>think</i> .)	ف	<i>f</i>
ج	<i>j</i>	ق	<i>q</i> (A guttural <i>k</i> sound produced at the back of the palate.)
ح	<i>h</i> (Hard <i>h</i> sound made at the Adam's apple in the middle of the throat.)	ك	<i>k</i>
خ	<i>kh</i> (Pronounced like the <i>ch</i> in Scottish <i>loch</i> .)	ل	<i>l</i>
د	<i>d</i>	م	<i>m</i>
ذ	<i>dh</i> (Pronounced like the <i>th</i> in <i>this</i> .)	ن	<i>n</i>
ر	<i>r</i>	ه	<i>h</i>
ز	<i>z</i>	و	<i>w, u, ū</i>
س	<i>s</i>	ي	<i>y, i, ī</i>
ش	<i>sh</i>		
ص	<i>ṣ</i> (An emphatic <i>s</i> pronounced behind the upper front teeth.)		
ض	<i>ḍ</i> (An emphatic <i>d</i> -like sound made by pressing the entire tongue against the upper palate.)		

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate



All praise belongs to Allah. May His blessings, peace and mercy be upon our master Muhammad, the best of creation, his folk and Companions, and all those who follow them in excellence until the Day of Reckoning.

Creeds articulate the principal points that define a person's faith and explicate the fundamental convictions concerning Allah, His prophets, scriptures, angels and eschatological truths. These are essential in that they provide clarity about one's belief and guard one against theological heterodoxies and aberrations. They form the basis for a person's acts of worship, without which such actions are of no avail. The Prophet ﷺ, in many of his sayings, issued a dire warning against aberrancy and innovation. He ﷺ said, 'Whoever then dissents will dissent into Hell,' (narrated by al-Hâkim) and 'Allah will not accept prayer, fasting, charity, hajj, umrah, jihad and voluntary and obligatory actions (*ṣarf wa 'adl*) from an innovator. He will be removed from Islam just as a hair is removed from dough.' (Narrated by al-Bayhaqī.)

In light of such hadiths, Muslim scholars have duly emphasised the importance of learning and adhering to the orthodox creed, as aberrancy in one's belief is patently more detrimental to one's faith than committing the major sins. Its critical importance perhaps has never been greater than in this age of confusion, scepticism and intellectual malaise, wherein many Muslims are questioning the very basic tenets of their faith. Imam 'Abd Allāh al-Haddād (d. 1132/1720) states in *The Book of Assistance*:

You must correct and protect your beliefs and conform to the pattern of the party of salvation, who are those known from among the other Islamic factions as the 'People of the Sunna and Jamā'ah'. They are those who firmly adhere to the way of

the Messenger of God, may blessings and peace be upon him, and of his Companions... Each believer must protect his faith by learning the creed of one of the *māms* who are incontestably worthy of respect, and well-grounded in knowledge.¹

Similarly, in highlighting the gravity of innovation in belief, Imam Muḥammad ibn Bīr al-Birkiwī (d. 980/1573), the sixteenth-century Ottoman scholar, states in his monumental book *al-Ṭarīqah al-Muḥammadiyyah*:

Innovation (*bid'ah*) in belief is what is understood from the application of [the terms] innovation, innovator (*mubtadi'*), whim (*hawā*) and heretics (*ahl al-ahwā'*) at first sight. Some of these [innovations] are disbelief,² and some are not.³ These [innovations in belief] are nevertheless graver than any major sin, even murder and adultery, and there is nothing worse than them besides outright disbelief (*kufr*).⁴

Many works on Islamic theology that were guided by both reason and scripture have been formulated throughout Islam's history. They vary in their detail, from extensive voluminous works to concise summaries. Of the latter type, the creed of Imam Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) is arguably the most acclaimed and universally accepted. It is, moreover, one of the earliest works on creed; and its enduring appeal among Sunni scholarly circles is attested by the numerous commentaries written on it, the various languages it has been translated into, and the many Islamic seminaries at which it is the primary creedal text that is taught.

Despite the availability of several English translations of the text, commentaries on it in the English language are scarce. The few that are available are, unfortunately, by authors with heterodox tendencies,

¹ al-Ḥaddād, 'Abd-Allāh. *The Book of Assistance*. 2nd edn. London: The Quilliam Press Limited, 1998, 40–41.

² For instance, the belief that Allah is a body like other bodies.

³ For example, the denial of the interrogation in the grave.

⁴ al-Birkiwī, Muḥammad. *Ṭarīqah maḥmūdiyyah fī sharḥ Ṭarīqah Muḥammadiyyah*. n.p. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Babī al-Ḥalabī, 1348/1929, 1:94.

who arrogated the creed to themselves to propagate their aberrant doctrines that are at odds with those of the author. A prime example of this is the widely-circulated commentary of 'Alī ibn Abī al-'Izz al-Ḥanafī (d. 792/1390). Although a Ḥanafī in jurisprudence, he nonetheless departed from Sunni Orthodoxy on certain points of doctrine, most notably the question of Allah's attributes and His transcendence.

Over a dozen notable scholars of calibre across a millennium have penned commentaries on Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī's creed. The current translation is based on one such commentary by Imam Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī (d. 740/1339). This work was chosen for translation because of its conciseness and simplicity, and upon the recommendation of some scholars. The text's primary aim is to present Sunni theology in a way that makes it relevant to the lives of seekers of sacred knowledge, as well as to provide a clear and rigorous exposition of this foremost science.

This commentary was first published by the Kuwaiti ministry of endowments and Islamic affairs, after being edited by Dr 'Arif Ayatakun and revised by Dr 'Abd al-Sattār Abū Ghuddah, and then by Dār al-Bayrūti with notes by 'Abd al-Salām al-Shannār. Both of these editions ascribed the work to the great Ḥanafī jurist Imam Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābartī (d. 786/1384). It was later published in Egypt by Darah al-Karaz and edited by Shaykh Ḥāzim al-Kaylānī al-Ḥanafī and Dr Muḥammad al-Qādir al-Naṣṣār, who ascribed it to Imam Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī. It was most recently published by the Turkish publishing house al-Maktabah al-Ḥanafiyyah, after being edited by Dr Aḥmad Maḥmūd al-Shaḥādah. The latter, in his introduction, ascribed the work to al Ghaznawī, despite al-Bābartī's name being on the front cover.

The reason for this confusion is perhaps due to the fact that both Imams (al Bābartī and al-Ghaznawī) were contemporaries and Ḥanafis, and both spent a large portion of their lives in Egypt. However, the editors of the al-Maktabah al-Ḥanafiyyah and Darah al-Karaz editions have noted that this ascription to Imam al-Bābartī is incorrect, and they cited credible reasons that establish al-Ghaznawī as the author. These are:

1. Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441), al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449)—both of whom were the mainstay of biographers

of the people of the eighth century Hegira—and others who were contemporaries of al-Bābartī made no mention of al-Bābartī authoring a commentary on the Ṭaḥāwī creed;

2. al-Maqrizī stated in his biography of al-Ghaznawī in *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-faridah*, 'He has given me licence—writing for me in his handwriting to narrate all of what is authentic to relate of the narrations he has heard and his works.' He then named the latter and included, 'the commentary on the creed of al-Ṭaḥāwī';
3. it was heard directly from its author when he was residing in al-Ḥaram (Mecca) in the year 764 AH. This was mentioned by Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Kābulī, who was the scribe of the manuscript that was published in Qāzān on a number of occasions, the earliest of which was in the year 1311 AH. He said in it, 'I have finished writing it in accord with the author's draft copy written in his handwriting, and he is the Shaykh, the *faqīh*, the practising scholar... Sirāj al-Dīn Abū al-Ṣafā' ʿUmar ibn Ishāq ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥanafī al-Hindī, the Chief Justice of the Maṣṣūrah military in Egypt and Shām...';
4. Hibah-Allāh al-Turkmistānī (d. 733/1333), in his commentary on the Ṭaḥāwī creed, quoted from al-Ghaznawī's commentary on more than forty occasions;
5. the dedication of the book to Amir Ṣarghatmush al-Nāṣirī (d. 759/1358), the founder of the madrasah in which al-Ghaznawī used to teach and with whom al-Ghaznawī shared a strong bond (as al-Ghaznawī himself notes in his book *al-Ghurrah al-munīfah fi tarjīḥ madhhab Abī Ḥanīfah*).

The Dār al-Bayrūtī, al-Maktabah al-Ḥanifiyyah and Dārah al-Karaz editions were utilised in translating the text. Any differences between the editions have been footnoted, though such instances are very few. There were a couple of instances in the Dār al-Bayrūtī edition where a passage or two had been omitted; these were included in the translation in accordance with the other two editions.

With regard to the format of the translation, the primary text (*matn*), both in the Arabic and English, is written in bold font to differentiate

it from the commentary that follows it on a new line. In the original Arabic version both the text of Imam al-Ṭahāwī and the commentary were merged as a single running text, and so the current formatting into chapter headings and subheadings is from the translator. The footnotes on hadith references and variations in the manuscripts have been drawn from the Dar al-Bayrūtī and al-Maktabah al-Ḥanifiyyah editions. Additional footnotes on the biographies of figures, the sects, and elaboration of some of the theological points have been provided by the translator.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who assisted me in bringing this translation to fruition, in particular: Andrew Booso, for copy-editing the text, Muhammad Ridwaan, Waqar Hussain, Faisal 'Noori' Hussain and Mohammad Ansa.

IMAM ABŪ JA'FAR AL-ṬAḤĀWĪ



Imam Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Salāmah al-Azdī al-Ḥajrī al-Ṭaḥāwī was born in Ṭaḥā, a village in Upper Egypt. His forefathers came to Egypt from Yemen after it had come under Muslim rule. There are numerous opinions as to the year of his birth but, according to the great historian and Hadith master Ibn 'Asākir, the most accurate of date is 239/853. He died in Egypt in 321/933.

He was raised in a family known for its knowledge, piety and integrity, in addition to their being influential and powerful in Upper Egypt. His father, Abū Salāmah, was of a scholarly and religious background. According to the most reliable opinion, his mother was the sister of Imam al-Muzanī (d. 264/878), a close disciple of Imam al-Shāfi'ī.⁵ She too was known for her knowledge, wisdom and righteousness.

As one would expect with being raised in such a virtuous family, he read and memorised the Qur'an in his childhood at the hands of a devotee named Abu Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Amrūs. He then studied *fiqh* in accordance with the school of Imam al-Shāfi'ī, initially under his father Muḥammad ibn Salāmah, and then under the instruction of his maternal uncle al-Muzanī. He, however, later adopted the Ḥanafī school. It is said that the reason for Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī's conversion to the Ḥanafī school was that he would often peruse the books of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah in admiration of his legal reasoning and compelling arguments. Upon discovering this inclination of his towards Imam Abū Ḥanīfah's school,

⁵ Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ibn al-'Abbās al-Ḥāshimī al-Qurashī al-Muṭṭalabī, Abū 'Abd-Allāh al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820). One of the four *muṭaḥid* Imams. Jurist, theologian, exegete and eponymous founder of the Shāfi'ī school of law. Born in Gaza. He died in Egypt. Educated in Quran, hadith and fiqh in Mecca, Medina, Iraq and Cairo. He systematised the theoretical bases of Islamic law and outlined the doctrines and differences of Islamic law schools; thus he is often called 'the architect of Islamic law'.

his uncle swore to Allah that he would never be successful. In anger and rage, he left his studies with him and began his study of *fiqh* according to the school of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah, later becoming the leading Ḥanafī authority in Egypt.

He also studied *fiqh* under Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Abi 'Imrān. He travelled to Shām and met the chief justice Abu Khazim 'Abd al-Ḥamīd; he studied *fiqh* under him and heard hadiths from him. As well as *fiqh*, Imam al-Ṭahāwī was an authority in the science of Hadith and chains of narration. He heard hadiths from many of the Egyptian shaykhs and foreign shaykhs visiting Egypt. It is said that he studied with 298 shaykhs from different parts of the Muslim world. After earning a reputation in scholarly circles for his in-depth research of legal issues and meticulousness in substantiating them, many students from various parts of the Islamic world came flocking to him to study under him and benefit from his vast knowledge.

He wrote some of the most brilliant and commendable works, including:

- *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Qur'anic exegesis);
- *Ma'ānī al-āthār* (Hadith);
- *Mushkīl al-āthār* (Hadith);
- *Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-kabīr* (Ḥanafī jurisprudence);
- *Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghīr* (Ḥanafī jurisprudence);
- *Ikhtilāf al-'ulamā'* (comparative jurisprudence);
- *Kitāb al-shurūṭ al-kabīr* (Ḥanafī jurisprudence);
- *Kitāb manāqib Abī Ḥanīfah* (biography);
- *Nawādir al-fiqhiyyah* (Ḥanafī jurisprudence);
- *al-Radd 'alā 'Isā ibn Abān* (polemics);
- *al-'Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwiyyah* (theology).

Imam al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) said of his works, 'Whoever examines the works of this Imam realises the level of his scholarship and the breadth of his knowledge.' Imam Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1070) said of him, 'Al Ṭahāwī was Kufan in his school of law but a scholar of all the various schools of the jurists.' Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṣuyūṭī (d. 911/1505) stated in *Husn al-muhādarah ḥuffāz al-ḥadīth*, 'He was a reliable narrator

and jurist. No one like him succeeded him. He was the foremost scholar of the Ḥanafis in Egypt.' Whenever teaching or answering problematic questions, he would say, 'May Allah have mercy on my uncle! If he were alive [today], he would have expiated for his oath.'

It is worth noting that although Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī followed the Ḥanafī school by adhering to its principles, he nevertheless was a *mujtahid*⁶ in his own right. Ibn 'Ābidin (d. 1252/1836), the foremost Ḥanafī jurist of his time, described him in his epistle *Uqūd rasīm al-muftī* as belonging to the third of the seven ranks of jurists: those who can weigh and select between conflicting opinions on legal issues. Thus he would exercise *ijtihād* on legal matters on which nothing had been transmitted from the founder of the school.

Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī died aged eighty-two on Thursday 1 Dhū al-Qa'dah (may Allah Most High have mercy on him). He was buried in Qarāfah. He left behind a remarkable scholarly legacy.⁷

⁶ An absolute *mujtahid* is a scholar who is qualified to exercise his own reasoning in deriving legal rulings from the sources of Sacred Law. There are, however, several levels or ranks of *mujtahids*. Imam al-Ṭaḥāwī is one of the most famous examples of scholars who were *mujtahids* within a legal school, whereby they arrived at their own conclusions by following the principles of a founding absolute *mujtahid*.

⁷ Biographical notes taken from Najm al-Dīn Abī al-Wafā' al-Qurashī's *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyyah*.

IMAM ABŪ HAFṢ SIRĀJ AL-DĪN AL-GHAZNAWĪ



Imam ‘Umar ibn Ishāq ibn Aḥmad al-Hindī al-Ghaznawī, Sirāj al-Dīn, Abū Hafṣ was born around the year 704/1304. His initial studies were in India, but he later travelled to the two Noble Sanctuaries to perform Hajj, and from there he travelled to Cairo around the year 740/1339. He studied under the foremost scholars of Cairo and received much acclaim for his virtues. He subsequently became the judge for the military after serving as a deputy to al-Jamāl al-Turkmānī. He was later appointed as Chief Justice of the Hanafis in Egypt, and also held the position of an instructor in the grand Ṭulūnī mosque after the death of Zayn al-Dīn al-Bisṭāmī. He was held in high esteem by Amir Ṣarghatmush al-Nāsirī. He was an upright scholar, a major authority in the Hanafī school, and widely regarded as a polymath. He was extremely intelligent, humble and dedicated to taking care of the needs of those seeking his help. He would go above and beyond in reciprocating any service offered to him.

Imam Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī studied under many of the leading shaykhs of his time, including:

- Wajīh al-Dīn al-Rāzī, one of the leading imams in Delhi, with whom Shaykh Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī studied jurisprudence;
- Mubārak ibn al-Ḥasan, nicknamed the Ascetic Imam al-Sayyid Fakhr al-Dīn, again in Delhi;
- *Al-Bā’ilī, who is the ascetic Imam Wajīh al-Dīn, one of the leading imams in Delhi.*

Imam Siraj al-Dīn al-Ghaznawī was a prolific author, and his works include the following:

- *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Tahāwiyyah* (the current work). He authored it early on in his career, before he reached the age of thirty;
- *Lawā'ih al-anwār al-rabbāniyyah* (Sufism);
- *Al-Gurrah al-munīfah fī tarjīḥ madhhab Abī Ḥanīfah* (Hanafi jurisprudence);
- *Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-kabīr fī al-furū'* of Imam Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (Hanafi jurisprudence);
- *Sharḥ al-Ziyādāt* of Imam Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (Hanafi jurisprudence);
- *Al-Munīr al-zāhir min al-fayḍ al-bāhir min sharḥ al-Mughnī of al-Khabbāzī* (jurisprudence);
- *Zubdah al-aḥkām fī ikhtilāf madhāhib al-a'imma al-arba'ah al-a'lām* (comparative jurisprudence);
- *Al-Tawshīḥ fī sharḥ al-Hidāyah* of al-Marghīnānī (Hanafi jurisprudence);
- *Sharḥ al-Mukhtār* of al-Mawṣilī (Hanafi jurisprudence);
- *Sharḥ al-Manār* of al-Nasafī (jurisprudence);
- *Sharḥ Tā'iyyah of Ibn al-Fārīd* (Sufism).

He died in Cairo on the night of 15 Rajab 773/1372.⁸

⁸ Biographical notes taken from 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Laknawī's *al-Fawā'id al-bahīyyah*, Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's *Durar al-ūqūd al-farīdah* and 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī's *Nuzḥat al-khawāṭir*.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate



I place my trust in Him alone. All praise belongs to Allah, whose existence is necessary and perpetual, whose generosity and kindness are immense, whose beneficence and liberality are eternal, and whose might and grace are universal. His essence is transcendent beyond any resemblance or image, and His attributes are exalted far above change and cessation. May His blessings be upon His Messenger, Muhammad, whom He sent to call to the truth and guide creation! May Allah bless him, his folk and companions, the leaders of guidance and the lanterns in the darkness of the night.

To proceed: indeed, the most sublime, loftiest and most necessary science for any intelligent person to acquire and the most pertinent is the science of the foundations of the religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*). This [science] includes knowing Allah Most High (*ma'rifaḥ Allāh*), which is the basis of all knowledge and the source of every [true] felicity. Indeed, jinn and humankind (*ṭhaqalayn*) were created for this purpose, according to the interpretation of the exegete of the Qur'an, Ibn 'Abbās, of His Most High's words: *I have not created jinn and humankind except to worship Me* [Qur'an 51:56], to know Me. Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ called it 'the foremost knowledge' (*ra's al-'ilm*) when a Bedouin asked and said to him, 'Teach me the obscure aspects of knowledge, O Messenger of Allah.' He ﷺ asked, 'What have you done about the foremost knowledge?' The Bedouin replied, 'What is the foremost knowledge?' He ﷺ said, 'Knowing Allah.'⁹ This [pre-eminence] is because the nobility of knowledge is by virtue of the

⁹ Narrated by Mālik in *Musnad al Muwaṭṭa'*, Wakī' in *al-Zuhd*, Abū Nu'aym in *al Hilyah*, and Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm wa fadlihi*.

nobility of its subject, and since Allah Most High is more sublime and exalted than any other being, knowledge of Him is the most sublime and vital knowledge for one to acquire, and the most worthy of honour and reverence. There is no hope for salvation and attaining [elevated] ranks except by gaining and acquiring it.

The sects have differed in that [aforementioned] regard. However, the party attaining salvation has been alluded to by the Prophet ﷺ in his saying 'By the One in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, my nation will split into seventy-three sects: only one will be in Paradise and seventy-two in Hell.' He was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah! Who are they?' He replied, 'Al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.' He was then asked, 'What is al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah?' 'What I and my companions adhere to,' he replied.¹⁰ It therefore behoves an intelligent person to adhere to the path of the adherents of al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah and stay clear of the path of heretics and innovators; for the former is the path of the Companions and their Successors, and which the righteous predecessors adhered to. Many authorities of Islam and adept theologians applied themselves to expounding their [al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah] school. Some elaborated and wrote detailed [commentaries], some wrote moderately and some were more selective.¹¹

¹⁰ Narrated by al-Tirmidhi with a similar wording in the Book of Faith.

¹¹ The Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah (the Adherents of the Sunna and the Congregation) are those who adhered to the way of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions Ṣ before the emergence of the blameworthy innovations of the sects like the Shī'ah, Khawārij and Murji'ah. They have always constituted the vast majority of Muslims. Imam Tāj al-Dīn ibn al-Subki [d. 771/1370] said in his commentary to *Aqidah Ibn al-Hajib*:

Know that all of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah have a unified creed concerning what is possible and impossible [in ascribing to Allah], even though they differed in their methods and principles qualifying that. In summary, after thorough examination [of the matter], they comprise three groups:

- 1) the traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*), whose foundational principles are the textual proofs from the Book and Sunna, and scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*),
- 2) those of rational argumentation (*ahl al-naẓr al-'aqlī*). These are the Ash'aris and the Hanafi-Māturidis. The Shaykh of the Ash'aris is Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'ari [d. 324/936] and the Shaykh of the Hanafis is Abū Maṣ'ūr al-Māturidi [d. 333/944]. They agree on the rational principles in every tenet of faith on which revelation is contingent, and in the textual principles in those matters that the human reason conceives as being merely possible, and in those that are both rational and textual in addition to the above. They have also agreed on all the [core] tenets of faith, while only disagreeing on a few [secondary] issues;
- 3) and those of experiential states and unveilings (*ahl al-wujūd wa al-kashf*). These are the Sufis, and their principles are the same as those of rational argumentation and tradition

Of the concise creeds whose beginnings and endings are illumined in its beauty, and whose conciseness and marvels contained an enchanting exposition, is the work of the vast ocean and the eminent scholar, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī رحمه الله. Owing to its immense benefits and delightful wording, people were passionate about reading and memorising it. I therefore decided to pen a brief commentary on it, [with the intention of] revealing its secrets, clarifying its obscurities and lifting its veils, while relying on Allah, the One who showers His goodness and generosity, and grants existence to every being.

When it reached the pinnacle of excellence and beauty, and the height of subtlety and allusion, I thought for a while as to whose name I should dedicate it, so that it remains forever in his legacy. As I vacated my heart of all misgivings and turned it to the Madyan of the Unseen,¹² I thereby received inspiration in the recesses of my soul from the holy realm (*'ālam al-quds*), hidden [even] from my shirt buttons,¹³ to present it as a gift to the assembly of the one who ascended from the constellation of felicity as a full moon shining with light and filling the hearts with joy and ebullience, and who became the beauty of the hearts (*ghurrah al-jinān*)¹⁴ in delight and radiance, and the continuous rainfall from the skies in elevation and splendour. The marks of blessings appeared on him; prosperity and divine providence accompanied him in his movements; the traces of felicity glistened on him; and the fragrances of pre-eminence effused from him. He is the venerable, the exalted and sublime amir, the pride of all the world leaders, the sanctuary for the poor and the destitute, the peerless one of his age and the adornment of Egypt, the benefactor, the holder of the sword and pen, who combines both the virtues of knowledge and practice, who has attained both

in their initial stage, and [their state is that of] spiritual unveilings and divine inspiration (*ilhām*) in their final stage.

Ghawjī, Wahbī Sulaymān. *Masā'il fi 'ilm al-tawhīd*. 1st edn. n.p., 1420/1999, 13–14.

The traditionists (*ahl al-hadīth*) referred to above are not to be confused with the pseudo-*ahl al-hadīth* of our time, who reject the need to follow the four schools of law, and who espouse anthropomorphic notions about Allah Most High.

¹² Drawn from the verse of Qur'an: *And when he turned his face towards Madyan he said, 'It may be that my Lord will guide me'* (Qur'an 28:22). What is intended here is contemplation.

¹³ Another manuscript copy reads *أخفى من دُرِّي* ('more hidden than my pearls').

¹⁴ Another manuscript copy reads 'the admonition for the hearts' (*'ibrah al-jinān*).

religious and worldly felicity, the one from whose forehead shines the light of guidance and in whose right hand the flags of God-consciousness are raised, who puts the vast oceans to shame with his benevolence, and the early morning clouds with his goodness and generosity, the august amir, Sayf al-Dīn Shaykh al-Malikī al-Nāṣirī Ṣarghatmush al-Malikī al-Ṣāliḥī.¹⁵ May Allah maintain his honour, make his treasure abound with blessings, preserve his life from others, and perpetuate his joy and happiness! He has been entrusted in this age with training scholars, dedicated to assisting the virtuous. All praise be to Allah, who has let loose the tongues of people to proclaim his praise, and girdled the necks of scholars with the burdens of his munificence.

It is befitting for the introduction of a book to be honoured by the appellations of such a person who encompasses the aforementioned qualities and virtues like how the skies encompass the stars and planets; and to be ascribed to his excellency, so that his honourable name remains in books and records among people throughout the alternation of nights and days and the passing of aeons and years. I found everyone orientated by his aspiration to ingratiate himself [to him] by serving him with a generous gift. However, [when I found that] my state was inhibiting me from offering a gift that corresponds to his generous treasury, or resembles the matchless gems therein, I recalled the words of al-Mutanabbī:¹⁶

[If] You have neither steeds nor wealth to give
Then let [your] words cheer [him] if [your] state cannot

When I realised that knowledge is the most desired thing and the most precious gift to him, I chose to present him with the aforementioned

¹⁵ Amir Sayf al-Dīn Ṣarghatmush ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Nāṣirī, one of the freed slaves of King al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn. He continued to rise in ranks until he, alongside Amir Shaykhūn, became one of the eminent amirs and governors of Egypt. After the murder of Shaykhūn, his influence grew until he eventually took complete control over the state's affairs. Fearing him, King al-Nāṣir Ḥasan imprisoned him, and he remained in prison until death in 759/1358. He was virtuous, courageous, generous and an awe-inspiring leader. He was fond of scholars and would often sit and discuss legal and linguistic matters with them, and lavish them with benefactions.

¹⁶ Ahmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ju'fī al-Kūfī al-Kindī, Abū al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965). He was a wise poet and one of the masters of Arabic literature. He made the claim to prophethood in the Samāwah desert, between Kufa and Shām and was followed by many people. Eventually, Lu'lu', the amir of Homs, captured and imprisoned him. He subsequently repented and retracted his claim.

commentary in writing. I hope from his utter compassion that he receives it with goodly acceptance, as that is my utmost wish. And if my life is long and I am assisted in achieving [my] goals, I shall compile a book for him in jurisprudence that incorporates a lucid summary of what is in the extensive works. Allah Most High alone gives success, and He alone guides to the [straight] path.

EXPOSITION OF THE CREED OF AHL AL-SUNNAH WA AL-JAMĀ'AH



Let us return to the commentary, al-Ṭahāwī (may Allah Most High have mercy on him) stated,

هَذَا ذِكْرُ بَيَانِ عَقِيدَةِ¹⁷ أَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ عَلَى مَذْهَبِ فَضَاهِ الْجَلَّةِ: أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ التُّغَمَّانِيِّ بْنِ ثَابِتِ الْكُوفِيِّ، وَأَبِي يُوسُفَ يَعْقُوبَ بْنِ إِسْرَاهِيمَ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ، وَأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ الْحَسَنِ الشَّيْبَانِيِّ، وَمَا يَتَقَلَّدُونَ مِنْ أَصُولِ الدِّينِ، وَمَا يَلِيغُونُ بِرَبِّ¹⁸ الْعَالَمِينَ.

This is an exposition of the creed (*'aqīdah*) of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah according to the school (*madhhab*) of the jurists (*fuqahā'*) of the religion (*dīn*): Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān ibn Thābit al-Kūfi,¹⁹

¹⁷ Another manuscript copy reads إعتاد ('belief').

¹⁸ Another manuscript copy reads رَبِّ.

¹⁹ Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān ibn Thābit, the Greatest Imam (*al-imām al-a'zam*), born in 80/699 in Kufa, Iraq, and passed away in 150/767 in Baghdad. Muslim jurist, theologian, and the eponymous founder of the Ḥanafī school of law. The son of a merchant, Imam Abū Ḥanīfah in his early life took up the cloth trade for a living and eventually became moderately wealthy. He would later spend much of his acquired wealth sponsoring his students. In the initial phase of his intellectual career he was attracted to theological debates, but later disenchanted with theology, he turned to jurisprudence, which he studied for about eighteen years under the tutelage of Ḥammād ibn Abi Sulaymān (d. 120/737), then the most noted Iraqi jurist. After Ḥammād's death, Abū Ḥanīfah became his successor. The school of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah acquired such prestige that it was applied by a majority of Muslim dynasties. Even today it is widely followed in India, Pakistan, Turkey, Central Asia, and Arab countries. Along with his legal acumen, he was famed

Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī²⁰ and Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī.²¹ It consists of the foundations of the religion that they believed in and with which they submitted to the Lord of the Worlds.

His use of the word 'This' indicates something in the mind, if he authored the introduction before the remainder of the book. This is similar to what he [Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Nasafī] said in *al-Manzūmah*,²² 'This is a book on scholarly disagreements.' However, if he authored it [the introduction] afterwards, then the demonstrative pronoun indicates something externally existent.

The term '*aqīdah*' [on the scale of] *fa'īlah* bears the meaning of a passive participle (*maḥ'ūl*), i.e. that which the heart is bound to ('*aqada*') and has firm resolve [to do]. One says, 'So-and-so believed such and such,' when his heart was bound to it and had firm resolve. The science of the foundations of the religion (*ilm uṣūl al-dīn*) has only been called '*aqīdah*' because it is related to the heart's resolve, not action with the limbs. Its purpose is therefore the knowledge itself, as opposed to the science of legal rulings (*ilm al-furū'*), wherein the purpose would be [related to] actions with the limbs.

The use of the expression 'Ahl' in relation to something conveys that which is closely associated with it; and the word 'al-Sunnah' linguistically means a path (*ṭarīqah*). According to the sacred law, the latter is the term given to the path trodden in the religion. It [al-Sunnah] may also refer to the way of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions, as attested to by his saying ﷺ 'Adhere to my *sunnah* [way] and the *sunnah* of the rightly-

for his exceptional piety, devotion and asceticism. It is noted that for forty years he prayed the *fajr* prayer with the ablution he performed for the '*ishā'* prayer.

²⁰ Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Kūfī al-Baghdādī (d. 182/798). He was one of Abū Ḥanīfah's closest companions and pupils, and the first to promote his school. He held the position of qadī during the reign of the Abbasid caliphs al-Mahdī, al-Hādī and al-Rashīd. He was the first to be given the honorific *Qādī al-quḍāh* (the Chief Judge). His most well-known work is *Kitāb al-kharāj* [The Book of Taxes].

²¹ Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd-Allāh al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805). He is a leading authority in jurisprudence, and the one who propagated Imam Abū Ḥanīfah's knowledge. He was appointed as the qadī of Raqqa (in Syria) by Hārūn al-Rashīd.

²² *Al-Manzumah fī al-khilāf* by Imam Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142). He arranged it into ten chapters presenting therein the differences between Imam Abū Ḥanīfah and his colleagues, and similarly Imams al-Shāfi'ī and Mālik.

guided caliphs after me'.²³ However, what is meant here is the path which the Prophet ﷺ adhered to and which Allah enjoined him to call [people] to; in His Most High's saying: Say, 'This is my way: I call unto Allah with sure knowledge. I and whosoever follows me' [Qur'an 12:108]. What is intended by 'al-Jamā'ah' is the Companions and those who follow them in excellence. This is alluded to in his saying ﷺ 'It is the path which I and my companions adhere to'.²⁴ This path has only been called the 'path of Ahl-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah' because it runs contrary to the path of heretics and innovators.

[In its original acceptation] a *madhhab* is any place where one goes, and it is the path on which one travels. According to customary usage (*urf*) it became an expression for any [legal] opinion that every *mujtahid* arrived at. It is said, 'The *madhhab* of Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allah have mercy on him); when referring to the legal judgements that his belief arrived at. It is as if he goes towards that particular way and is followed by those who do *taqlid* of him'.²⁵

The term '*fuqahā*', plural of *faqīh*, from the verb *faquha* with the *dammah*, [is employed] when understanding becomes an instinctive trait. It is not from the verb *faqiha* with the *kasrah* as it [this form] is used for other than instinctive traits. The poet said,

Sometimes a generous person is miserly; yet he has not
Miserliness, but that is the misfortune of the seeker.

Fiqh is linguistically defined as subtle understanding that is based on one's natural intelligence (*qariḥah*).²⁶ One does not say, 'I have understood (*faqihtu*) that the sky is above the earth.' According to its technical usage, *fiqh* is [defined as] the science pertaining to legal

²³ Part of a longer ḥadīth narrated by al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Knowledge in his *al-Sunan*, al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, and Ibn Mājah in his introduction.

²⁴ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan*, and similar to it by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak* and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaf*.

²⁵ *Taqlid*, often misunderstood to mean mere blind following, is defined as acceptance of legal rulings on matters of Sacred Law from a *mujtahid*, without necessarily knowing his evidence for those rulings.

²⁶ Another manuscript copy reads 'evidence (*qarīnah*)'.

rulings based on their proofs. Fakhr al-Islām²⁷ added, 'And acting in accordance with them,' so that knowledge does not, in and of itself, become the goal. Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allāh have mercy on him) stated, '*Fiqh* is the self's knowledge of what is advantageous to it and what is disadvantageous to it.' In other words, it benefits from the reward for performing acts of obedience and incurs harm from the punishment for committing unlawful acts and [breaching] prohibitions.

He only referred to Abū Ḥanīfah and his two colleagues as 'jurists (*fuqahā*) of the religion'—namely, the true religion with which the Prophet ﷺ was sent—because they are the scholars most elevated in rank and the most persuasive in argument and proof, pioneers in formulating the theological foundations (*uṣūl*) and legal rulings (*furū*'), combining sound reasoning and tradition; and because a jurist is a scholar who knows the rulings of the sacred law with their proofs and acts in accordance with them, and they [Abū Ḥanīfah and his two colleagues] have combined them both.

As for his knowledge, then his legacy is evident in the East and the West. Wakī²⁸ said, 'Abū Ḥanīfah was given unparalleled success in jurisprudence and theology.' Ḥusayn²⁹ said, 'I heard al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl³⁰ say, "People were asleep with regard to jurisprudence until Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allāh have mercy on him) awoke them with what he cleft, elucidated and summarised." It is authentically related from al-Shāfi'ī (may Allāh have mercy on him) that he said, 'All people are dependents of Abū Ḥanīfah in jurisprudence.' Aḥmad ibn Ṣabāḥ said, 'I heard al-Shāfi'ī say, "I asked Mālīk ibn Anas³¹, 'Have you seen

²⁷ 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Bazzawī, Abū al-Ḥasan Fakhr al-Islām (d. 482/1089). A jurist, jurisprudent, hadith master and Qur'anic exegete. He was the leading Hanafī in Transoxiana. His works include a commentary on *al-Jāmi'* *al-Kabīr* of Imam Muḥammad.

²⁸ Wakī ibn al-Jarrāḥ Abū Sufyān (d. 197/812). A *ḥāfiẓ* of hadith (one who has memorised a hundred thousand or more hadiths with their chains). He was the hadith master of Iraq in his time. Hārūn al-Rashīd wanted to appoint him as the qadi of Kufa; but due to his scrupulousness, he declined. He passed away on his way back from hajj.

²⁹ Husayn ibn Hurayth ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Thābit, Abū 'Ammār al-Marwazī (d. 244/859). Ibn Ḥibbān counted him among the reliable narrators. He passed away on his way back from hajj.

³⁰ Al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl ibn Kharashah, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 203/819). One of the scholars of Arab history, hadith and linguistics. He passed away in Merv.

³¹ Mālīk ibn Anas al-Asbahī (d. 179/795), the eponymous founder of the Mālīkī school of law. He was born and lived in Medina, leaving only to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. He

Abū Ḥanīfah?' He replied, 'Yes. I saw a man who, if he told you that this column is made of gold, he would be able to substantiate it.'³² As for his religious devotion and practice, then we have the words of 'Alī ibn Zayd: 'I saw Abū Ḥanīfah ؒ complete the recital of the entire Qur'an in the month of Ramadan sixty times: a complete recital during the night and a complete recital during the day.' Ḥafṣ ibn Ghiyāth said, 'Abū Ḥanīfah performed the dawn prayer with the ablution of the nightfall prayer for forty years.' His virtues in knowledge and devotion are well known and innumerable.

When Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī—who is the Imam of the hadith masters—came to the realisation that they combined knowledge and practice, and that their school of thought is the mainstay of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, he called them the 'jurists of the religion' and chose it [their school] for himself. That is so because Abū Ḥanīfah was born during the Companions' era and narrated from some of them, and he learnt jurisprudence in the age of the Successors [of the Companions] and even debated some of them. He was thus considered one of them. Allah was pleased with them, and they were pleased with Him, as expressed by the Mighty Book. Moreover, the Prophet attested to their virtue when he ﷺ said, 'The best of generations is the one I am in; then those who follow them...'³²

[Regarding] his phrase 'the foundations of the religion that they believed in', belief has already been explained; and 'the foundations of the religion' is a genitive construction that has been designated a proper noun for a specific science. In terms of its being a science, it has been said about its definition: [it is] a science wherein the names of Allah, His attributes and actions, and the states of created beings, such as the angels, prophets, saints and imams, the beginning of creation and the Afterlife are investigated in accordance with the canons of Islam—not in

compiled a collection of hadiths of the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions and their Successors, entitled *al-Muwatta'*. He was one of the principal teachers of Imam a.-Shāfi'.

³² Narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of the Virtues of the Companions with the wording 'The best of people are my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them...'; Muslim in the Book of the Virtues of the Companions, al-Tirmudhī in the Book of Tribulations, Abū Dāwūd in the Book of Sunnah, and al-Nasā'ī in the Book of Oaths and Vows.

accordance with the principles of the philosophers—to gain certainty in the articles of faith and to counter obfuscations (*shubahāt*).

Occasionally the [science of] 'the foundations of the religion' is called 'the science of speech' (*ʿilm al-kalām*), either because:

1. the most prevalent issue they discussed and fought over is the question of [Allah's] speech, hence this science was named after it; or
2. it has been said that it was named 'speech' because the perfection of speech is only manifested by explaining facts and revealing finer points, and that is only achieved by [studying] this science [of the foundations of the religion]. Thus this science itself has been metaphorically-speaking named 'speech' by way of exaggeration; or
3. it has been said that when those who reject rational investigation and conclusive proofs were questioned about matters related to Allah's attributes and actions, they retorted, 'We have been forbidden from speaking about this.' Hereafter, this name became popularly applied to it, and because of its prevalent usage [among the experts], it became a proper noun for it.

In terms of its being a possessive noun, the word 'foundation' is what something is built upon. The word 'religion (*dīn*)' is a divine order that induces those with intelligence to that which is good, meaning Islam. Allah Most High said: *Indeed, the [true] religion with Allah is Islam* [Qur'an 3:19]; *and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion* [Qur'an 5:3]. The term '*dīn*' has also been explained with the meaning of compliance and obedience, and recompense and accountability. Hence a religious person is one who is an obedient Muslim, who affirms recompense and accountability on the Day of Resurrection, and who is the finest of Allah's slaves.

His phrase 'and with which they submitted to the Lord the Worlds' means the religion they adopted and thereby sought reward from Allah. The word 'Lord' is the owner, and 'worlds' is the plural of 'world' (*ʿālam*), which is a name for those beings possessing knowledge, namely the angels, humans and jinn. It has been said that it is that by which the creator is known, namely bodies and accidents. It is called this because it is a sign (*ʿālamah*) pointing to the existence of the Maker.

2

DIVINE UNITY



نَقُولُ فِي تَوْحِيدِ اللَّهِ مُعْتَقِدِينَ بِتَوْفِيقِ اللَّهِ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاحِدٌ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ. وَلَا شَيْءٌ مِثْلُهُ، وَلَا شَيْءٌ
يُنْجِزُهُ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ.

We assert regarding Allah's unity, believing by Allah's enablement, that Allah is One (*Wāḥid*), He has no partner. Nothing is like Him. Nothing incapacitates Him. There is no god save Him.

He only began with the [discussion on] divine unity because the first obligation of a morally responsible person is to affirm it.³³ It is the

³³ Most Hanafis opine that to know Allah Most High's existence, oneness and being characterised by attributes of perfection, such as knowledge, power, life and the like, and that He is the originator of the world, is obligatory upon people by merely their having intellects, even if He did not send a messenger to mankind. By contrast, most Ash'aris opined that belief in Allah and the prohibition of disbelief is not an obligation before a messenger is sent, or on one who is raised in isolation and did not receive the message

As for what is attributed to Imam al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in his epistle *Fayṣal al-tafriqah* regarding certain Christians living remote from Muslim lands and thus having no interaction with Muslims, attaining salvation because of not having received the correct message of Islam, then Imam Abū 'Abd-Allah al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490) comments.

What I believe is that al-Ghazālī mentioned in *al-Tafriqah* the excuse for womenfolk, the simple minded and the like, whose lands are remote from Muslim lands and to whom the call of the Prophet ﷺ did not reach at all, or it did but in a distorted manner. As for those whose lands are close to Muslim lands, or those to whom the message of the Prophet ﷺ has reached in its correct form and who can access the knowledge of it from Muslims, then al-Ghazālī agrees in their disbelief and that they have no legitimate excuse in the Hereafter

reason why the prophets were sent and the heavenly scriptures were revealed. Allah Most High said: *And We sent no messenger before you except that We revealed to him, [saying]: There is no god save Me [Allah], so worship Me* [Qur'an 21:25]. He only said, 'believing'—which is an adverb of state (*ḥāl*) from the pronoun in 'we assert'—in order for the realisation of faith to be true, because mere profession of faith with the tongue without belief in the heart is not faith. Rather, it is hypocrisy (*nifāq*), based on what Allah Most High has related about the state of the hypocrites with His words: *Those who say with their mouths: 'We believe,' but their hearts believe not* [Qur'an 5:41]. He only said 'by Allah's enablement' to allude to the position of Aḥl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah that one's arrival at [the belief in] divine unity is through Allah's guidance, in accordance with His Most High's saying: *Allah guides whom He wills to His light* [Qur'an 24:35], and not by slaves' doing, as the Mu'tazilah ('Seceders') claim.³⁴

His words 'Allah is One (*Wāḥid*)' is the elaboration of what he is going to say, namely: We say ..., while believing ..., that: Allah is One. It has been said that *Wāḥid* and *Aḥad* are synonymous. Allah has been described as both in the Qur'an. Allah Most High said: *He is Allah, the One (Wāḥid), the Dominator* [Qur'an 39:4]; Say, 'He is Allah, the Unique (*Aḥad*)' [Qur'an 112:1]. It has been said that each of them connotes something which the other does not, as *Wāḥid* is used to connote the attributes [of Allah] whereas *Aḥad* refers to His essence. It is said, 'So-and-so is one (*wāḥid*) of his time,' meaning thereby that he alone possesses qualities of

Al-Ghazālī ؒ is therefore far from the opinions of those innovators who opposed the consensus of Orthodox Muslims. Allah Most High knows best.

al-Sanūsī, Abū 'Abd-Allah. *Sharḥ al Muqaddimāt*. 1st edn. Damascus: Dār al-Bayrūtī, 1430/2009, 86.

³⁴ One of the earliest sects in Islam. Its origins can be traced to its founder Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā', who was born in the year 80/700 in Medina during the caliphate of Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik [d. 125/743], and died in 131/748. He is the first to proclaim the view that a sinner is in an intermediate state. He seceded from the assembly of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [d. 110/728] ؒ, and began to propagate the belief that a major sinner is neither a believer nor a disbeliever, whereupon the latter said, "Wāṣil has seceded from us" hence the reason why they were called the Seceders. They would, however, refer to themselves as the exponents of justice and divine unity. With support from some of the caliphs they rose to dominance during the early part of the third century, and consequently their school of thought became prevalent. But they encountered stiff resistance from [Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, and then] the Ash'aris and the Māturidis, which led to them being eventually defeated. Farfūr, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. *al-Risālah al-Nāfi'ah wa al-ḥujjah al-qāṭi'ah*. 1st edn. Damascus: Maktabah Dār al-Farfūr, n.p., 6.

perfection not shared by another. Hence it has been said that Allah Most High is *Aḥad* in His essence and *Wāḥid* in His attributes. Al-Azhari³⁵ said, 'The *Wāḥid* in relation to the qualities of Allah Most High denotes two meanings: He is One (*Wāḥid*); He has no peer, and there is nothing like Him. The Arabs say, "So-and-so is one (*wāḥid*) among his tribe," if he is peerless. The second meaning is: He is a single deity and a single Lord, i.e. He has no partner in His divinity and Lordship.'

Exposition of the meaning of divine unity

Enunciating divine unity, one of our colleagues said, 'It is the negation of [Allah having] a partner, a rival and anyone resembling Him.' Hence Allah Most High is:

1. one in His actions: He has no partner in bringing created things into existence;
2. one in His essence: He has neither a rival nor composition therein;
3. one in His attributes: He does not resemble creation in them.

Before establishing the proof of divine unity, we must mention the proof of His existence, the obligation to know Him and the means of acquiring that [knowledge].

Disagreement on the obligation to know Allah Most High

We say: people have held differing views on the obligation to know Allah:

1. the Hashawīyyah,³⁶ who adhere to the literal meanings of the sacred texts, opined that to know Allah Most High is not obligatory.

³⁵ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al Azhari, Abū Maṣṣūr. One of the leading authorities of Arabic linguistics and literature. His works include *Gharīb al-alfāz allatī ista'mala hā al fuqahā* ('Unfamiliar expressions employed by jurists') and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. He passed away in Herat in 370/980.

³⁶ Al-Subkī said in *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl Ibn al Ḥājib*, 'The Hashawīyyah are a group who strayed off the right path: they interpret the [allegorical] verses of Allah according to their ostensive meanings and believe that that is what is intended. They were branded thus because, once when they were in al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's study circle, he found them speaking erroneously and so he remarked, "Return this lot to the fringe (*hashā*) of the study circle." They henceforth were ascribed to *hashā*.'

Rather, what is obligatory is to have correct belief derived from the literal meanings of the texts. They condemned those who adduce rational proofs [to validate their beliefs].

2. the majority of Muslims argued that knowing Allah is obligatory. They differed, however, over the means to acquiring this knowledge:
 - a) The Sufis and those of the spiritual path opined that the only way of knowing Allah is by self-discipline and purification of the inner self so that it is prepared to receive the divine gifts, proofs and gnosis that the mind is incapable of expressing. They, therefore, rely on experience in attaining gnosis.
 - b) A group said that one can only know [Him] through divine inspiration (*ilhām*).
 - c) The Ismā'īlī clergy³⁷ have said that one can only acquire it [knowledge of Him] through instruction from the Infallible Imam. Consequently, they regard the appointment of such an Imam as necessary and consider it impossible for there to be a time devoid of an Infallible Imam who guides mankind to the knowledge of Allah.
 - d) The vast majority of theologians opined that the only way to know Allah Most High is by contemplation and deduction, as knowledge of His Most High's existence is not self-evident and therefore requires evidence. However, because the textual proofs from the Book and the Sunna are secondary to establishing it [His existence] and prophethood, it is not possible to adduce them to substantiate fundamental beliefs. It is therefore necessary to adduce rational proofs, which have also been validated by Scripture. The way to prove His Most High's existence is either by [deducing from] the possibility of the existence of the universe, or its origination, or both; each of which either relates to substances or accidents.

³⁷ One of the most extreme Shīte sects. They believe Isma'īl ibn Ja'far (d. 143/760) to be the rightful leader (Imam) after his father al-Šādiq, followed by his son Muḥammad, who is the seventh Imam according to them; hence they are called the Seveners to distinguish them from the Twelvers. They are most famously branded as the Bāṭiniyyah (Esotericists), as they believe that every ostensive meaning has a hidden esoteric meaning, and they figuratively interpret the sacred texts in a manner far from the objectives of the Shariah.

The allusion to deducing [the existence of the Creator] from the possible existence of entities is found in His Most High's saying: *And Allah is Self-Sufficient, and it is you that are needy [of Him]* [Qur'an 47:38]. That is so because a possible being (*mumkin*) is intrinsically in need of something to bring it into existence. By contrast, the necessary (*wājib*) in its existence is in no need of anything else. The allusion to deducing [the existence of the Creator] from the origination [of the Creation] is in His Most High's words about the story of Ibrāhīm ؑ: *I love not those that set* [Qur'an 6:76]. This method is that which is most accessible to creation. It is confined to two matters: signs within the souls and signs on the horizons, as alluded to in His Most High's saying: *Soon We will show them Our signs on the horizons and within their souls* [Qur'an 41:53].

As for the signs within the souls, it is that every person intuitively knows that he did not exist and then came into existence, and anything that comes into existence after nonexistence must have a creator. Furthermore, that creator cannot be himself, his parents, or the rest of creation, because their inability to produce something similar is intuitively known. Hence there must be an eternal maker who is dissimilar to these existent things. As for the signs on the horizons, then that is because the universe is ever-changing, and this change is known by observation, such as of the variation in the seasons, night and the day, the rising and setting [of the sun], thunder and lightning, clouds and so forth. Since every changing thing has an origin, it must have an eternal originator, because if it [the originator] were originated, it, in turn, would need another originator, thereby leading either to a circular argument or infinite regress; both of which are rationally impossible.³⁹ This kind of reasoning is the method of the prophets (peace be upon them) and the earlier scholars and sages. That is because Allah only manifested the proof of Ādam's superiority ؑ [over the angels] by making his knowledge prevail over that of the angels; and that is sheer deduction.

³⁹ Infinite regress is impossible because it leads to the existence of endless Gods, each of whom is originated, powerless and needy, which is absolutely false, as it is incompatible with the rank of Godhood possessed of omnipotence and absolute independence. al-Dardir, Aḥmad. *Hāshiyah 'alā Sharḥ al-Kharidah*. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1366/1947, 56.

Citing Nūḥ ؑ, Allah Most High said: *O my people! Tell me if [it be that] I have a clear sign from my Lord, and that He has sent mercy unto me from His own presence, but it had been obscured from your sight? Shall we compel you to accept it when you are averse to it?* [Qur'an 11:28]. Moreover, He informed about his people with His words: *They said: 'O Nūḥ! You have disputed with us and prolonged the disputation with us* [Qur'an 11:32]. It is known that this disputation was not over secondary matters, but rather over divine unity (*tawḥīd*), prophethood and supporting the truth with decisive proofs.

Ibrāhīm's method ؑ of proving Allah's existence

Ibrāhīm ؑ went through numerous situations:

1. With himself, which is His saying: *When the night grew dark upon him he beheld a star. He said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said: 'I love not things that set'* [Qur'an 6:76]. This is the method the theologians employ in proving that it is originated by its changing [nature]. Furthermore, Allah Most High praised him [Ibrāhīm] for that, for He said: *That is Our argument. We gave it to Ibrāhīm against his folk* [Qur'an 6:83].
2. With his father, which is His saying: *He said to his father, 'O my father! Why do you worship that which can neither hear, nor see, nor help you in any way?'* [Qur'an 19:42].
3. With his people, in word and deed, which is His saying: *So he broke them into pieces, [all] but the biggest of them, so that they may turn to it* [Qur'an 21:58].
4. With the sovereign of his time, Numrūd, which are his words: *My Lord is He who gives life and causes death* [Qur'an 2:258]. He inferred divinity from an action which others are incapable of [performing the like of], namely giving life, causing death and bringing the sun from the East.

Mūsa ؑ predominantly relied on Ibrāhīm's proofs ؑ, [which we know] because Allah Most High related in *Sūrah Tāhā*: [Pharaoh said,] *'Who, then, O Mūsā, is the Lord of you two?'* He replied, *'Our Lord is*

He who gave to each [created] thing its form and nature, and further, gave [it] guidance' [Qur'an 20:49–50]. This is the same proof which Ibrāhīm expressed in his words: Who created me, and it is He who guides me [Qur'an 26:78]. And he said in Sūrah al-Shu'arā': 'Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old' [Qur'an 26:26]; this is [effectively] what Ibrāhīm said: My Lord is He who gives life and causes death [Qur'an 2:258]. When Pharaoh was dissatisfied and demanded further proof, Mūsā said: Lord of the East and the West [Qur'an 26:28]; this is same as what Ibrāhīm said: Allah causes the sun to rise in the East, so cause it to come up from the West! [Qur'an 2:258].

As for our Prophet ﷺ, then his engagement with proofs for [establishing] divine unity, prophethood and the resurrection are so profuse and evident that there is no need to mention them, as the Qur'an is replete with them. He Most High said: *Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and argue with them in the best possible manner [Qur'an 16:125].* Undoubtedly, what is meant by His saying *with wisdom* is proof and evidence, hence to call with proof and evidence was a command. As for His saying *and argue with them in the best possible manner*, it is not intended to mean arguing about secondary issues, since they rejected the basis of the Shariah; it must therefore necessarily mean arguing about divine unity and prophethood.

He Most High said: *Yet there is among men such a one that argues about Allah without knowledge [Qur'an 22:8].* One understands from it that arguing with knowledge is not blameworthy, but rather praiseworthy. Allah Most High has enjoined on us to consider, ponder and reflect; He said: *Say, 'Consider what is in the heavens and the earth' [Qur'an 10:101]; Have they not considered the dominion of the heavens and the earth? [Qur'an 7:185].* Moreover, He mentioned contemplation in the context of praising it: *In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for those who possess intelligence [Qur'an 2:190]; Indeed, in these things there is a lesson for those who have vision [Qur'an 24:44].* And He condemned [the disbeliever's] disregard for [His] signs: *How many a sign is there in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, yet they turn aside from it! [Qur'an 12:105]; They have hearts wherewith they understand not*

[Qur'an 7:179]. Allah Most High also condemned blind following, citing the disbelievers, He said: *We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps* [Qur'an 43:23]; *Nay, we shall follow what we found our fathers doing* [Qur'an 2:170]. All of the above-quoted [verses] demonstrate the obligation to ponder and reflect, and the blameworthiness of blind following.

The aim of this [discussion] is to counter the Hashawiyah's condemnation of those who engage in [the science of] the foundations of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), even though [this science of] the foundations of religion is simply adherence to the aforementioned proofs and a guard for them against obfuscation. In fact this is the occupation of the infallible prophets, whereas blind following is the occupation of the forsaken disbelievers.

Notwithstanding, the nobility of knowledge is only by the nobility of the subject of it. Since Allah's essence and attributes are the noblest subjects that can be known, the science related to them—namely the science of the foundations of religion—is the noblest of the sciences. [This superiority is] also because knowledge is either religious or otherwise, and the religious is nobler than all else. Furthermore, religious knowledge is either that of the foundations of the religion or what is dependent on it. For instance, an exegete of the Qur'an only analyses the meanings of Allah's speech, which are secondary to [knowing] the existence of the Willing Speaking Maker, who is only known through the [science of the] foundations of the religion. Likewise, a hadith specialist only analyses the words of the Messenger ﷺ, which are secondary to [knowing] the establishment of prophethood. Similarly, a jurist investigates Allah's rulings, which are secondary to divine unity and prophethood. The [reasons] above therefore demonstrate that these sciences are dependent on the [science of the] foundations of religion, whereas the latter is independent of them and thus nobler. The facets in which it [this science] preponderates over the rest of the sciences are far too many to be enumerated in this abridgement.

Let us cite some examples of the method employed by the earlier righteous Muslim community (*Salaf*) to argue compellingly against the atheists with irrefutable proofs. It is related that when one of the heretics

denied the Maker in the presence of Ja'far al-Šādiq,³⁹ he asked, 'Have you travelled on sea and seen its horrors?' He replied, 'Yes, I have travelled on sea where horrendous winds raged, thereby breaking the ship and drowning the sailors. I managed to hold onto a plank, but that plank slipped away from me, and, lo and behold, I was pushed by the tides of the ocean until I happened to reach the seashore.' Ja'far asked, 'Did you hope to be saved?' He replied, 'Yes.' 'In whom did you hope for safety?' he asked. The man was speechless. Ja'far remarked, 'Indeed, the Maker is the One in whom you hoped at that moment, and He is the One who saved you from drowning.' He thereupon accepted Islam at his hands.

It has also been related that Abū Ḥanīfah was a cutting sword against the atheists (Dahriyyah).⁴⁰ They would look for any opportunity to kill him. [One day] while he was sitting in the mosque, they pounced on him with unsheathed swords. As they were about to kill him, he asked them, 'Give me an answer to a particular question and then do as you wish.' They replied, 'Go ahead.' He asked, 'What would you say about a man who says to you, "I have seen a laden ship in the middle of the ocean surrounded by tidal waves and winds blowing from all directions, but despite which it continued to travel straight without a sailor anchoring it." Is that rationally possible?' They replied, 'No, this is something inconceivable to the mind.' Abū Ḥanīfah replied, 'Glory be to Allah! If it is not rationally possible for a ship to travel straight without a sailor, then how is it possible for this universe, with all its various conditions, to exist without a Maker?' They all began to weep, and then repented and accepted Islam at his hands.

Once a sage asked al-Shāfi'ī, 'What is the proof of the existence of the Maker?' He replied, 'Is the taste, smell and colour of [one] mulberry leaf [to another] the same according to you?' 'Yes,' they replied.

³⁹ Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Bāqir ibn 'Alī Zayn al 'Ābidīn ibn al Ḥusayn, Abū 'Abd-Allāh. He is considered the sixth of the twelve Imams according to the Twelvers. He was one of the foremost *tābi'īn*. A group of luminaries studied under him, among them Imams Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas. He was called al-Šādiq [the Truthful], as he was never known to lie. He passed away in Medina in 148/765.

⁴⁰ A group of disbelievers who believed that time is eternal and who attributed all events to it. Allah Most High relates about them with His words. They say, '*There is nothing but our life of this world; we die, and we live, and nothing but Time destroys us*' [Qur'an 45:24].

He asked, 'Then [why is it that] when a silkworm feeds off it silk appears; when a bee [feeds off it] honey appears; when sheep [feed off it] excrement emerges; and when a deer [feeds off it] musk is formed in its musk glands? Who is it that made them thus even though the nature [of the mulberry leaf] is one?' They approved of this from him and became believers at his hand. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal⁴¹ used as evidence [for the existence of the Creator] a smooth reinforced fortress with no opening, externally like melted silver and inwardly like pure gold. Its walls suddenly split open and an animal that can hear and see emerges from the fortress. Thus it must have a maker. He meant by the 'fortress' an egg and by the 'animal' a chick.

When Ḥārūn al-Rashīd⁴² asked Mālik about that [the existence of the Creator], he inferred that from the difference in voices, the reverberation of sounds and the variance in languages. When Abū Nuwwās⁴³ was asked about it [the existence of the Creator], he replied:

Reflect on this plant [daffodil] on earth and look at
 The effects of what the Mighty King produced
 Eyes of silver fixed
 As if their pupils are made of melted gold
 On the stalks of peridot there are proofs
 That Allah has no partner
 And that Muhammad is the best of creation
 To the two weighty beings the Mighty King sent him

When a Bedouin was asked for proof [of the existence of the Creator], he replied, 'A camel dropping proves the existence of a camel; dung proves the existence of a donkey; and traces of footsteps prove the

⁴¹ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal ibn Ḥilāl ibn Asad al-Shaybānī, Abū 'Abd-Allāh (d. 241/855). He is the eponymous founder of one of the four Sunni schools of law. He studied under many scholars, including Imams Abu Yusuf and al Shāfi'ī, later to become a *muftahid* Imam and a hadith master in his own right. He was particularly renowned for his scrupulousness and fortitude in upholding the truth against the ruler of the heterodox Mu'tazilah sect, for which he was tortured. His students include Imams al-Bukhārī, Māslim and Abū Dāwūd.

⁴² Ḥārūn al-Rashīd ibn Muḥammad al Mahdī ibn al Manṣūr al 'Abbāsi, Abū Ja'far (d. 193/809), the fifth and most well-known caliph of the Abbasid dynasty in Iraq. He was a scholar of literature, history of the Arabs, hadith and jurisprudence.

⁴³ Al Ḥasan ibn Ḥānī' Abū Nuwwās. The leading poet of Iraq in his time. He established links with the Abbasid caliphs and would praise them. He passed away in Baghdad in 198/813.

travelling [of a person]. Does the sky with its constellations, the earth with its cols, and the oceans with their tides not prove the existence of the All-Knowing, the Omnipotent?' A doctor was asked, 'By what [proof] did you know your Lord?' He replied, 'By the fruit of the myrobalan: [when] dried, it causes diarrhoea; and [when] softened with saliva, it causes constipation.' Another replied, 'I knew Him by a bee: in one of its ends it produces honey (*tu'sil*), and in the other, it stings (*talsa*); and [the word] '*asa*' [honey] is inverted from *lasa*' [sting].'

The proof of divine unity

Let us return to the objective, namely the proof of divine unity. We say: the Maker of this universe is one, since if it had two makers, then mutual hindrance could have resulted between them, which is a proof that both of them are originated, or at least one of them. This is so because if [there were two makers and] one of them intended to create life in a person, while the other [intended to create] death, then either:

1. both realise their objective, which is impossible because of [it entailing] the unity of opposites in a single locus (*maḥall*); or
2. neither of their objectives is realised, in which case it is a proof of their powerlessness; or
3. the objective of one of them is realised and not the other, which is a proof of the powerlessness of the one who could not execute his will; and one who is powerless is unfit to be God.

This [argument] is called the proof of mutual hindrance (*dalil al-tamānu*'), drawn from His Most High's words: *If there were therein gods beside Allah, then verily both [the heavens and the earth] would have been in a state of disorder* [Qur'an 21:22].⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In summary, if there were two Gods, then either they agree or they differ. If they agree, then it is not possible for them to concurrently bring it into existence so that it does not entail the conjunction of two creators to a single effect. Neither is it possible for them to consecutively bring it into existence, such that one of them brings it into existence and then the other brings it into existence, as that entails accomplishing what has already been achieved. Nor is it possible for one of them to bring some of it into existence and the other to bring the rest of it into existence, as that entails both of them being powerless, because when the power of one of them related to that

As for his statement 'He has no partner', he intended by it to negate all forms of associating others with Allah (*shirk*), since association (*ishtirāk*) linguistically means equality. This association can be either in:

1. essence, as the dualists believed, for they affirmed that the universe has two makers: a virtuous one whom they called Yazdān and an evil one whom they called Ahraman,⁴⁵ and similarly the naturists and those who worship the planets; or
2. name and being worthy of worship, as the polytheists of Arabs believed, for they worshipped alongside Allah idols whom they called gods. They became polytheists, in spite of their professing Allah to be the Creator, because they worshipped others besides Allah. Allah Most High said: *If you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They will say, 'Allah'* [Qur'an 39:38]; or
3. attribution, as the anthropomorphists claimed, for they attributed to the Creator a form, body and settledness on the throne like a human, equating Allah with His creation and thus became polytheists.

Allah Most High declared His honourable self to be exalted above the aforementioned when He said: *Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner [to Him]!* [Qur'an 52:43] and: *Glorified be Allah from that which they attribute [to Him]* [Qur'an 37:159].

something it blocked the path to the power of the other to relate to it and therefore rendered the other incapable of opposing him, and this is powerlessness. This is called the proof of succession (*dalil al-tawārud*), because of them concurring over a single thing.

If on the other hand they differ, such that one of them intends to bring the universe into existence and the other wants to terminate it, then it is not possible for both of their wills to be enforced so as not to entail the unity of opposites, nor is it possible for the will of one of them to be enforced to the exclusion of the other, because that entails the powerlessness of the one whose will is not enforced, yet the other is like him in this hypothetical scenario because of the fact that they are to be considered equal. al-Bayḍūrī, Ibrāhīm. *Tuhfah al-murid*. 1st edn. Egypt: Matba'ah al-Khayriyyah, 1893/1310, 35.

⁴⁵ Yazdān is a Persian word meaning 'light', and Ahraman is a Persian word meaning 'darkness'. They believed that the former is the creator of all that is good, righteous and beneficial, and the latter is the creator of all that is evil, corrupt and harmful. Among their beliefs is that the god of good is eternal, whereas the god of evil is originated. They said that the cause of the creation of Ahriman was that Yazdān thought to himself about what would it be like to have a rival. As this thought of his was wrong, incompatible with the nature of light, it resulted in the creation of darkness, who was named Ahriman, and who was inherently disposed to evil.

As for his statement 'Nothing is like Him', it affirms the perfection of His essence in pre-eternity by negating [Him having] a peer and similitude. Allah Most High said: *There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him* [Qur'an 42:11]. This [verse] is categorical regarding the above-mentioned purport, so all the ambiguous verses to whose literal meanings the anthropomorphists cling are to be interpreted in light of it.

As for his statement 'Nothing incapacitates Him', then this is a description of His absolute power, because:

1. the existence of everything besides Him is by His bringing it into existence; thus it is impossible for anything to render Him powerless, as powerlessness is an imperfection, and Allah is exalted above imperfections;
2. He Most High is characterised as having complete power over everything, so He cannot be described as powerless, otherwise it necessitates the unity of opposites;
3. He Most High is Creator of all things, and creating is inconceivable alongside powerlessness. He has alluded to it in His Most High's saying: *Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yes indeed; He is the Creator, the All-Knowing* [Qur'an 36:81].

Allah's eternity

قَدِيمٌ بَلَا اَبْتَدَاءَ

[He is] eternal without a beginning,

because if He had been originated, He would have needed an originator, who in turn [would have required] another [originator], thus leading to an infinite regress or ending with an eternal being. Since infinite regress is rationally impossible, it must end with an eternal being. He only emphasised his words 'eternal' with his words 'without a beginning' because the [word] eternal, linguistically, is derived from their statement *qaduma al-shay' qidaman fa huwa qadim*, meaning 'a long time has

passed by it'. Al-Zamakhsharī⁴⁶ said regarding His Most High's words: *it [the moon] returns like an old (qadīm) shrivelled palm-leaf* [Qur'an 36:39], 'Something *qadīm* is that over which a year has passed, because the least duration for something to be described as old is a year. It is customarily said, "This is an old building (*binā' qadīm*)," and "This is an old shaykh (*shaykh qadīm*)."' This latter meaning is not what is intended with respect to the Creator. Rather, what is intended by the [word] *qadīm* in respect of His attributes is He who has no beginning to His existence. He therefore emphasised that to preclude the linguistic and customary meaning.

Allah's perpetuity

دَائِمٌ بِلاَ انْتِهَاءٍ.

Everlasting without an end.

Since it has been established that He Most High is eternal, it follows that He is everlasting, as eternality is inconsistent with nonexistence. He only said, 'Everlasting without an end,' to highlight that His Most High's everlastingness is not related to time, as it [time] comes to an end. This is the meaning of His Most High's words: *He is the First and the Last* [Qur'an 57:3], namely intrinsically the First and intrinsically the Last, not bound by time. He only described Himself thus so that it is not understood from His being the First and the Last that which is understood from others' being first and last, as these are only described thus because of their occurring in a former or subsequent time, not intrinsically.

لَا يَفْنَى وَلَا يَبِيدُ.

He does not perish nor cease to exist.

He does not come to nothingness and perish. He only mentioned both expressions to emphasise His everlastingness and perpetuity. It has been

⁴⁶ Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī al-Hanafī (d. 538/1144). He was an acclaimed linguist and an exegete of the Qur'an. He was, however, a major proponent of the Mu'tazilah sect and espoused their doctrines in his exegesis. He resided in Mecca and authored therein his well-known exegesis on the Qur'an titled *al-Kashshāf*.

said, 'He intended by the first [expression, i.e. "He does not perish"] to negate His essence coming to nothing; and by the second [expression, i.e. "nor cease to exist"] to negate the nullification of His life and attributes.' Such a notion in respect of His essence and attributes is impossible due to His intrinsically established eternality, as He is the intrinsically necessary existent, and whatever is intrinsic can never cease to exist.⁴⁷

Allah's will

وَلَا يَكُونُ إِلَّا مَا يُرِيدُ.

Nothing comes to be except what He wills,

because everything besides Him only exists through His producing, creating and willing it, as everything besides Him is possible [in its existence], and one of the two sides [existence and non-existence] of anything possible cannot preponderate [over the other], except by a preponderating cause. That [cause] must be Allah Most High's [attribute of] will, as there is no one else who [independently] wills. Allah Most High said: *He does what He wills* [Qur'an 40:3]; *Allah decrees whatever He wills* [Qur'an 5:1]; *Our word to a thing, when We intend it, is only that We say to it: 'Be!' and it is* [Qur'an 16:40].

He attributed to Himself volition (*mashī'ah*) and will (*irādah*), and therefore literally possesses them, contrary to the claim of al-Ka'bī⁴⁸ and those of the Mu'tazilah who followed him, like al-Nazzām.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ In other words, whatever admits non-existence cannot be eternal, because the existence of anything that may admit non-existence is merely possible, and anything whose existence is merely possible must be originated. Now every originated being needs a being to bring it into existence, i.e. to give preponderance to its existence over its non-existence; and it is established that He Most High is eternal by the aforementioned proof, and any being whose eternality is proven, its non-existence is impossible. The proof of His Most High's attribute of perpetuity is therefore the same as that of His eternality. al-Mu'akkhkhar, 'Alī al-Tamīmī. *Taqrīb al-ba'īd ilā Jawharah al-tawhīd*. 1st edn. Beirut. Mu'assasah al Ma'ārif, 1429/2008, 60.

⁴⁸ 'Abd Allāh ibn Ahmad ibn Mahmūd al-Ka'bī al-Balkhī (d. 319/931). A well-known scholar and one of the leading exponents of the Mu'tazilah sect. He was the head of one of their subsects, al-Ka'bīyyah, named after him. He held his distinct positions, among them is that Allah Most High does not possess will and that all of His acts involuntarily emanate from Him.

⁴⁹ Ibrahim al Sayyār ibn Hānī' al Nazzām (d. 221/836). He was an adherent of the Mu'tazilah sect and one of the prominent theologians of Basra. The Nazzāmiyyah branch of the Mu'tazilah sect is ascribed to him. He held views dissenting from his colleagues, among them are

They assert that He Most High does not literally have the attribute of 'will', but only [possesses this quality] in a figurative sense, because 'will' literally means desire (*shahwah*), which is impossible for Allah. We respond: the meaning of 'will', according to us, is the attribute which necessitates the particularisation of an object in one way rather than another, and at one time rather than another. Had it not been for His attribute of will, all possible beings would have emerged at the same time and in a single form. Since these objects emerged successively, one after another, systematically and in various forms and with distinctive attributes, in accordance with what [His] infinite wisdom dictates, it is a proof that their Agent is characterised by will, as they did not intrinsically necessitate the occurrence of such multiplicity. Hence it is known that it was due to their Agent's volition.

As for their assertion that 'will is desire', then that is a ruse from them to negate this attribute from Allah Most High. Desire is a specific kind of will, namely willing something in which there is a benefit for the one willing [it]. However, since Allah Most High is utterly self-sufficient, His will is not from desire, but rather by virtue of [His] divinity. Linguistically, the word *irādah* is derived from the word *rawd*, which means to seek; consequently, a person seeking herbage is called *rā'id*, and from it is the saying 'A *rā'id* does not lie to his people'.

Allah's dissimilarity to creation

لَا تَبْلُغُهُ الْأَوْعَانُ، وَلَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَنْهَامُ.

Imaginations cannot grasp Him, and understandings cannot comprehend Him.

Imagination (*wahm*) is the faculty wherewith one perceives particulars, and understanding (*fahm*) is the mind's comprehension of universals. Allah Most High is not compounded, nor does He have a modality

that consensus (*ijmā'*) is not a proof in the Sacred Law, and that analogy (*qiyās*) is not a proof for the derivation of legal rulings; rather, the sole proof is the statement of an infallible imam.

whereby He can be imprinted on the imagination, nor is He delimited whereby the mind can grasp His reality and encompass it. Nay, He is exalted above all of that! Allah Most High said: *while none encompasses His knowledge* [Qur'an 20:110]. This is so because comprehension (*idrāk*), which is to encompass something from all of its sides, is only conceivable in the case of what is delimited and finite.

وَلَا يُشَبِّهُ الْأَنَامَ.⁵⁰

He does not resemble creatures (*anām*).

It [*anām*] is anything that has a soul; it has also been said that it is the entire creation; and it has been said that what is meant by *anām* is man. This latter meaning is more probable because he intended by it [his statement] to negate the doctrine of the anthropomorphists (*mushabbihah*) and the corporealists (*mujassimah*), as they attributed to the Originator a body in the form of a man. He also intended to negate the doctrine of the Christians, as they assigned Him a son and wife. Allah is exalted above that! Undoubtedly a child resembles his father, so according to this, his statement 'And creatures (*anām*) do not resemble Him' conveys what his previous statement 'There is nothing like Him' does not, for the former statement is general whereas the latter is specific. It is therefore [understood as] emphasising Allah Almighty and Majestic's exaltedness above that which is unbecoming for Him.

He [Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī] said in *al-Tabṣirah*, 'Similarity (*mumāthalah*) is a generic noun consisting of four types: resemblance (*mushābahah*), parallelism (*muḍāhāh*), likeness (*mushākalah*) and equivalence (*musāwāh*). Similarity (*mumāthalah*) in all of its forms is negated in respect of Allah Most High because [for] two things [to be] identical, they must be able to replace each other, whereby each is fit for what the other is fit for. However, nothing else can replace Him, because [everything] is powerless under His dominance and is therefore unfit for what the Dominator is fit for.

⁵⁰ Another manuscript copy reads لَا يُشَبِّهُ ('[Creatures] do not resemble Him').

The aforementioned is based on their terminology. As for the exacting scholars, they have categorised in another manner and stated that union (*ittiḥād*) in:

1. type (*nawʿ*) is [termed] similarity (*mumāthalah*),
2. genus (*jins*) is homogeneity (*mujānasah*),
3. quantity (*kam*) is equivalence (*musāwāh*),
4. modality (*kayf*) is resemblance (*mushābahah*),
5. ascription (*mudāf*),⁵¹ such as the uniformity of Zayd and ʿAmr in being sons to Bakr [for instance], is compatibility (*munāsabah*),
6. form (*shakl*) is likeness (*mushākalah*),
7. composition (*wadʿ*) is conformity (*muwāzāh*),
8. borders (*aṭrāf*), such as the borders of two tumblers when one is turned upside down over the other, is correspondence (*muṭābaqah*).

Allah's life

وَمَوْحِيٍّ لَا يَمُوتُ.

He is living, He does not die,

as attested to by His Most High's words: *It is Allah who has produced for you the earth as a resting place and the sky as a canopy, and fashioned you and made your shapes beautiful, and has provided for you sustenance, of things pure and good. Such is Allah, your Lord. Then blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds! He is the Living One. There is no god but He* [Qur'an 40:64–65]. In this verse, there are signs, both rational and textual, affirming His life, as He began by mentioning the Maker and then followed that with mentioning His making with His words *who has produced*. He then mentioned what He made with His words *the earth*. He thereafter mentioned the evidence within what He made with His words *a resting place*, meaning He made it, notwithstanding its breadth and size, in a manner allowing you to settle and live on it, and it is made submissive [such that it is] unable to ward off [harm] from

⁵¹ Another manuscript copy reads 'parallelism' (*mudāḥah*).

itself. Furthermore, He split open the rivers therein and caused various kinds of fruit to grow from it. He then said, *and the sky as a canopy*, i.e. a protective roof standing in the air without a prop or attachment.

He then addressed those possessing intelligence about [His] fashioning their entities and the composition of their bodies so that they might reflect on the signs of His divinity and His complete omnipotence and wisdom. He said: *and fashioned you and made your shapes beautiful*. All the while they knew that they were lifeless and drops of sperm that issued from the loins of man and the rib of woman, and after that the drop transferred to a secure place of habitation, across three stages of darkness wherein the planning of the parents ceased. He then guided them to His Lordship by the effects of His making with His words *and fashioned you*, as there is no making without a maker. Moreover, He guided them to learn of His wisdom and knowledge⁵² by the manifestations of perfection and precision [found in creation] with his words *and made your shapes beautiful*. In other words, He made their composition beautiful, their stature being upright not limping. He outstandingly created in your bodies, from head to toe, that which is so beautiful that the comprehension of its reality bewilders the mind, and He made for you a cognitive mind.

He then reminded them of His blessings whereby they can survive, and said: *and has provided for you sustenance, of things pure and good*, i.e. provided you with the purest and finest of what He brought forth from the earth. In other words, He has brought forth from it various plants, yet He made the best and the softest of them as provision for man and the rest provision for animals. He then said: *Such is Allah, your Lord*, meaning He who made all of this for you is your Lord; there is no other Lord.

He then said: *He is the Living One. There is no god but He*. He taught them to deduce that a perfect act can only be performed by one who is living, able and knowledgeable. Indeed, whosoever ascribes such products to one who is not living is insane. Just as it can be deduced from a perfect act that its doer is able, it can similarly be deduced from

⁵² Another manuscript copy reads 'and He taught them'.

it that he is living, as life is a prerequisite for ability. In His statement *He is the Living One*, there is an allusion to the fact that He is the unconditionally living being (*al-hayy al-muṭlaq*), whose life is intrinsic, and that the life of others is merely incidental and derived from the effluence of His benevolence. They are living with a life that is from another, which is why death befalls them due to malady. As for His intrinsic life, it is impossible for death to befall because the eternally intrinsically necessary being cannot cease to exist. He, Glorified and Most High, alluded to this [point] in His words: *And put your trust in the Ever-Living who dies not* [Qur'an 25:58].

Allah's self-subsistence

قَيُّوْمٌ لَا يَنَامُ.

He sustains all (*Qayyūm*), He does not sleep.

The *Qayyūm* is the One who takes care of every person with what he acquires. It has been said that it is the One who protects; it has also been said that it is the One who undertakes the managing of the affairs of creation; and it has been said it is the One who is self-sufficient and sustains others.

خَالِقٌ بِلَا حَاجَةٍ.

He creates without any need,

as need is a defect that the one in need is in want of averting [from oneself], but Allah is utterly independent and therefore does not have any need for His action. Allah Most High said: *Indeed, Allah is free of need from the worlds* [Qur'an 29:6]. If someone were to say: the Creation has been mentioned in the Qur'an as being motivated by purpose, as in His Most High's saying: *I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me* [Qur'an 51:56], thereby demonstrating that they had been created for worship, we would respond: its interpretation is that [I did not create jinn and mankind] except that I shall command them to worship Me and forbid them from disobeying Me, and then reward them for their obedience

and lack of disobedience. Creating them was for the need of the morally responsible, not for His need, since they reap the benefit [of worshipping Him], and He incurs no harm by forgoing this. The above-quoted [verse] has only been thus interpreted so that it does not necessitate that there is an untruth in Allah's speech, as we know that they did not all worship Him.

رَازِقٌ بِلَا مُؤْنَةٍ.

He provides without any difficulty.

The meaning of this statement is that He provides for His creation without any endeavour, labour (*'ilāj*)⁵³ or seeking assistance by means, because whatever Allah has willed occurs by His creating (*takwīn*). He said: *Our word to a thing, when We have willed it, is only that We say to it, 'Be!' and it is* [Qur'an 16:40]. Due to His absolute omnipotence, He is not subject to any difficulty or hardship.

مُيْتٌ بِلَا مَخَافَةٍ.

He brings death without any fear.

In other words, He brings death to creatures without being subjected to fear and alienation, for their existence and nonexistence to Him are the same, as He is the Almighty, the Dominator and the uniquely everlasting and perpetual.

بَاعِثٌ بِلَا مَشَقَّةٍ.

He resurrects without any difficulty.

This is so because Allah Most High created the universe with His [attribute of] creating (*takwīn*) without enduring any hardship; He said: *Our word to a thing, when We have willed it, is only that We say to it, 'Be!' and it is* [Qur'an 16:40]. He is exalted above being subject to hardship in resurrecting and restoring to life, as restoring is easier than originating.

⁵³ This concept can also be expressed as *mu'ālajah*, which means that He Most High creates without needing any means, like limbs. Rather, the existence of things is contingent on the relation of His will and power to the things created. al-'Arusi, Mustafā, *Natā'ij al-afkar al-qudsiyyah*. Damascus: Jāmi' al-Darwashiyyah, 1:48.

This is alluded to by His words: *and it is easier for Him* [Qur'an 30:27]; *Were We then worn out by the first creation?* [Qur'an 50:15], meaning: We were not worn out by the first creation, so how can We be incapable of the second creation? *As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it* [Qur'an 21:104]; *He it is who produces creation, and then reproduces it* [Qur'an 30:27].

He said in response to the one who denied resurrection: *Has not man seen that We have created him from a drop of seed? Yet behold, he is an open opponent. And he has coined for Us a similitude and has forgotten his own [origin and] creation, saying, 'Who will revive these bones when they have rotted away?' Say, 'He will revive them who produced them at the first, for He is Knower of every creation, who has made for you fire out of the green tree, and behold! you kindle therewith [your own fires]. Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? Yes indeed, He is the Creator, the Omniscient.'* [Qur'an 36:77–81].

He provided a compelling argument against those who deny the second creation; He said: *O mankind! If you have any doubt about the resurrection, then [consider] that We created you out of dust, then out of a drop of seed, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, formed and unformed* [Qur'an 22:5]. In other words, how can you doubt the resurrection and deny it when Allah had created you out of dust in phases [of formation]. The meaning of *formed* is that it is a complete creation, and *unformed* is that it is left as a drop of sperm. His saying *that We may make clear for you* means: We may make clear for you His power and authority. For the One who has the power to transform you from the state of dust to man and, from the state of sperm to a clot, and then to a morsel of flesh, has the power to resurrect and revive after you have become dust and disintegrated to nothingness. Your death is simply this! Just as He had produced you in the beginning without difficulty, He will restore you [without difficulty].

ALLAH'S ETERNAL AND EVERLASTING NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES



مَا زَالَ بِصِفَاتِهِ قَدِيمًا قَبْلَ خَلْقِهِ، لَمْ يَزِدْ بِكَوْنِهِمْ شَيْئًا لَمْ يَكُنْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ صِفَتِهِ.⁵⁴

He eternally existed with His attributes before His creation (*khalq*). None of His attributes increased by their coming into existence from what they were prior to their existence.⁵⁵

He intended by this statement that Allah Most High is characterised by His beautiful names and lofty attributes, eternally and perpetually, be they the attributes of His essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*), like life, power, knowledge, will, volition, hearing and sight, or the attributes of His actions (*ṣifāt al-af'āl*), like producing, creating (*takwīn*), giving life and death.⁵⁶ All of

⁵⁴ Another manuscript copy reads صمات.

⁵⁵ Commenting on Imam al-Taḥāwī's above point, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghānī al-Ghunaymī (d. 1298/1881) says:

He, Glorified and Most High, always existed with His attributes in pre-eternity before He originated the creation, and none of His attributes increased due to its existence from what they were before its existence. This is so because had He acquired an attribute that He was not characterised by in pre-eternity, He would have then been at that point imperfect. Allah is exalted above that!

al-Ghunaymī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Taḥāwīyyah*, 3rd edn. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1995/1415, 56.

⁵⁶ There are three positions regarding the distinction between the attributes of Allah's essence and the attributes of His actions:

these are His attributes by which His essence is characterised, [and they are] eternal and preserved from cessation.

He was characterised by these attributes before His *khalq*, namely His creation, since the word *khalq* is sometimes mentioned and what is intended by it is creation, as in His Most High's saying: *This is the khalq of Allah* [Qur'an 31:11], meaning His creation (*makhlūq*). What is not intended by *khalq* here is the attribute of His essence, which is why he said, 'None of His attributes increased by their coming into existence,' i.e. by the existence of created things, 'from what they were,' prior to the created things. This statement means that nothing in Allah's attributes increased after the creation of created things that was not in His attributes before them. Rather, His attributes are without beginning.

The proof that Allah has attributes by which His essence is characterised is twofold: textual and rational. As for the textual evidence, there are the following words of His Most High: *They do not encompass anything of His knowledge* [Qur'an 2:255]; *He revealed it with His knowledge* [Qur'an 4:166];

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1. the Mu'tazilah position, which is that any attribute that can be negated or affirmed is among the attributes of His actions. For example, one says, 'He created for So-and-so a child, but did not create for So-and-so.' And any attribute that does not admit negation, such as [His] knowledge and power, is among the attributes of His essence. One does not say, 'He did not know such and such, and, 'He did not have the power to do such and such.' Since will and speech are among the attributes that admit negation and affirmation—He Most High said: *Allah intends ease for you, and intends not hardship for you* [Qur'an 2:185]; *and to Mūsā Allah spoke directly* [Qur'an 4:164]; *Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection* [Qur'an 2:174]—, they are attributes of His actions and thus originated;
 2. the Ash'ari position, which is that any attribute whose negation necessitates its opposite is among the attributes of His essence. For example, if you negate life, death is necessitated; and if you negate power, powerlessness is necessitated. And any attribute whose negation does not necessitate its opposite is among the attributes of His actions. For instance, if you were to negate [His] giving life, causing death or creating, their opposites are not necessitated. It follows that, if you were to negate [His] will, coercion is necessitated; and if you were to negate [His] speech, muteness and silence are necessitated. It is therefore established that they are among the attributes of His essence;
 3. the Māturīdī position, which is that any attribute that He has and whose opposite is impossible for Him to possess is among the attributes of His essence, such as power, knowledge, might and grandeur. By contrast, any attribute that is possible for Him to have along with its opposite is among the attributes of His actions, such as compassion, mercy, displeasure and anger.

Indeed, Allah is the Provider, the Lord of omnipotence [Qur'an 51:58]. Allah ascribed to Himself knowledge and omnipotence. Similarly, the rest of His attributes have been affirmed by His saying: *the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting by whom all subsist* [Qur'an 2:255], and His saying: *He is the Hearer, the Seer* [Qur'an 17:1].

This statement [of al Ṭahāwī] negates the view of the Mu'tazilah, as they opine that He is living, omniscient and omnipotent through His essence, not by an attribute additional to His essence, by which it is characterised. However, we say: the proposition that something can be living without life, knowledgeable without knowledge, and able without ability is inconceivable, just as the proposition that something can be moving without movement is inconceivable. This is so because these attributes are derived from [their] meanings and cannot therefore be applied to [Allah's] essence except by the existence of the source of their derivation.

As for the rational evidence, it is [predicated on the fact] that Allah Most High has brought forth this universe, with its multiplicity, into existence as it is in its precision, perfection, unique handiwork, incredible design and order; and the formation of the orbits and planets that continuously run [their course] therein. Moreover, [there is proof in] His subjugating the sun and moon to be constant in their courses, racing one another yet without overtaking the other; and [when they do] overtake one another, they do not collide. He made the night and day repeatedly to occur⁵⁷ over creation: one of them veils the surface of things and covers them with its strength, and the other unveils them and makes them manifest.

Similarly, there are the characteristics which are observed and witnessed in the bodies of animals, such as [their] life, distinctiveness, their being guided [by instinct] to obtain benefits and avoid harm, the subtle sensory faculties and respiratory passages in them; and the unique characteristics with which inanimate bodies have been endowed, in such a manner that were the perceptive scientists and sages of the world to contemplate them throughout their lives, they

⁵⁷ Another edition reads 'overlapping'.

would not be able to uncover their reality, not even a thousandth portion of the manifestations of [His] perfect wisdom and the subtleties of [His] planning that is found in them. Therein is definitive proof for those who possess intelligence that the Maker of these things is characterised by attributes of perfection, such as knowledge, power, volition, will and wisdom, and that He is exalted above their contraries that are defects.

وَمَا كَانَ بِصِفَاتِهِ أَزَلِيًّا، كَذَلِكَ لَا يَزَالُ عَلَيْهَا أَبَدِيًّا.

Just as He was eternally (*azaliyyan*) characterised by His attributes, He will likewise continue to be characterised by them perpetually (*abadiyyan*).

The point of this statement is to affirm the beginningless eternity and everlastingness of His Most High's attributes. They are without a beginning and eternal because had they an origin, they would either subsist:

1. in His essence; or
2. in another locus; or
3. without a locus.

All of the above [propositions] are impossible, because:

1. Allah's essence is not a locus (*maḥall*) for that which has an origin (*hawādith*);
2. the falsity of an essence becoming characterised by an attribute by which something else is characterised, like a locus becoming black with the colour black existing in another locus, or His becoming omnipotent by power that subsists in another;
3. the subsistence of attributes without a locus is impossible.

Since it is established that His attributes are necessarily eternal, it follows that they are perpetual and everlasting, as what is eternal cannot cease to exist.

It has been said of the derivation of the term *azal* [beginningless eternity] and *abad* [perpetuity] that *azal* is the term used for that which the heart is too constricted to conceive of as having a beginning,

from the word *azl*, which means constriction; and the word *abad* is the term used for that which the heart is averse to conceiving as having an end, from the word *ubūd*, which means aversion. *Azal* is mentioned in *al-Ṣiḥāḥ* with the vowelling [on the *za*]: [meaning] eternality. According to the nomenclature [of the theologians], it is that which has no beginning to its existence; and *abadī* is that which has no end [to its existence].

لَيْسَ بَعْدَهُ خَلْقُ الْخَلْقِ اسْتِفَادَ اسْمُ «الْخَالِقِ»، وَلَا بِإِحْدَائِهِ⁵⁸ الْبَرِيَّةِ اسْتِفَادَ اسْمُ «الْبَارِي».

It is not after He brought creation into existence that He acquired the name of the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), nor by His originating Creation did He acquire the name of the Originator (*al-Bārī*).

The Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and the Originator (*al-Bārī*) are synonymous. It is said, '*Bari'a*,' He created. *Bariyyah* means Creation. He only reiterated this statement to emphasise the point that Allah, in pre-eternity, was characterised by attributes of perfection and not void of any praiseworthy quality. This is so because it is impossible for His essence in pre-eternity to lack the attributes of perfection due to the deficiency that it necessitates, which is impossible in respect of Allah. Furthermore, the absence of any of them entails the need to gain it by bringing the universe into existence, but Allah Most High is utterly independent of all worlds, exalted above acquiring an attribute that He did not possess by bringing Creation into existence.

لَهُ مَعْنَى الرَّبُّوبِيَّةِ وَلَا مَرْتُوبَ، وَمَعْنَى الْخَالِقِ⁵⁹ وَلَا مَخْلُوقَ.

He had the quality of godhood when there was nothing to be god over, and the quality of the Creator when there was no created thing.

This [statement] is a confirmation of what he mentioned initially and an emphasis of it. He Most High is Creator and Lord before the existence of creation and subjects of His Lordship because His attributes are eternal [and] subsist in His essence. In summary, this

⁵⁸ Another manuscript copy reads *منذ* ('since').

⁵⁹ Another manuscript copy reads *بإحداث* ('by originating').

⁶⁰ Another manuscript copy reads *الخالقية* ('creativity').

statement negates the position of the Ash'arīs⁶¹ that the attributes of His essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) are eternal, whereas the attributes of His actions (*ṣifāt al-fi'l*)—such as producing, bringing into existence and creating (*takwīn*)—are originated. The latter view is also the position of the majority of the Mu'tazilah, the Najjāriyyah⁶² and the Karrāmiyyah.⁶³

We respond: Allah, together with all of His attributes, is eternal because He Most High glorified Himself in pre-eternity with the attributes of His actions in His saying: *He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names* [Qur'an 59:24]. It is therefore established that He is characterised in pre-eternity as being the Creator, the Maker and the Fashioner when there was no created thing, subject of His Lordship, or anything fashioned in pre-eternity. This is so because if the attributes of Allah's actions originated in His essence, it would entail that either:

1. He is a locus for that which has an origin, which is false; or
2. they exist in another locus; or
3. they exist without a locus.

⁶¹ One of the main schools of Sunni theology, affiliated to Imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, a descendant of the well-known Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ؓ. He was born in Basra in the year 260/874 and passed away in 324/936; thus he was a contemporary of both Imams Abū Ja'far al-Tahāwī and Abū Manṣūr al-Māturidī. In the earlier part of his life, he was affiliated to the Mu'tazilah sect and studied theology at the hands of Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'i, the leading scholar of the Mu'tazilah. At the age of forty, after a disagreement with al-Jubbā'i on the Mu'tazilī doctrine of it being obligatory for Allah to act in the best interests of His slaves, he publicly disavowed his former Mu'tazilī beliefs. He thereafter set out to propagate and defend the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah and refute theological heterodoxies, using both a rational approach while also preserving the primary importance of scripture. He wrote several works on theology, including *Mūjaz* (a rebuttal against the Mu'tazilah and Jahmiyyah) and *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin* (a work on the sects in Islam). Farfūr, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. *al-Risālah al-Nāfi'ah wa al-ḥujjah al-qāfi'ah*, 4.

⁶² One of the biggest Islamic sects, affiliated to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Najjār. They are in agreement with the Ahl al-Sunnah on the doctrine of Allah's creation of actions, the concurrence of ability with works and a person's acquisition of his own works. They are, however, in agreement with the Mu'tazilah on their doctrine of the negation of Allah's existent attributes and the origination of His speech. Al-Shahrastānī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm. *al-Milal wa al-nihal*.

⁶³ An anthropomorphist sect affiliated to Abū 'Ubayd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Karrām (d. 255/869). He was among those who would affirm Allah's attributes but went to the extreme of corporeality and anthropomorphism. Among their beliefs is the possibility of what is originated subsisting in Allah's essence. The Karrāmiyyah are further subdivided into twelve sects. *Ibid*.

All of the above [three propositions] are impossible. That is supported by His saying: *He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names* [Qur'an 59:24];⁶⁴ and [the above three propositions] have already been refuted.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

That is so because He has power over all things.

He indicated with his word 'That' to [Allah's] attributes he mentioned earlier, like giving life and death, and others. He thereby intended that He Most High was characterised in pre-eternity as having power over all things, even though the things within His power did not exist in pre-eternity. Similarly, He is characterised [in pre-eternity] by the rest of the attributes, like producing (*takhlīq*) and creating (*takwīn*), even though no created thing existed in pre-eternity. And because they [Ash'aris] affirm that He was All-Knowing, Omnipotent, All-Hearing and All-Seeing in pre-eternity, and that did not necessitate that those things He knows, hears and that are within His power existed in pre-eternity, so similarly His eternal creating (*takwīn*) is the creating of every created thing at the time of its coming into existence.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ "That is supported by His saying: *He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names*' is not found in the other manuscript. 'All of the above [three propositions] are impossible and have already been refuted' is also not found in another manuscript.

⁶⁵ Imam Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. 793/1390) states in *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, "The belief in *takwīn* is attributed to Shaykh Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī and those affiliated to him, and they ascribe it to their early masters before Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī. They said that the [following] statement of Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Ṭahāwī alludes to this: 'He had the quality of godhood when there was nothing to be god over, and the quality of the Creator when no created thing existed'. Furthermore, they agree that *takwīn* is eternal and it is distinct from His omnipotence (*qudrah*) and the thing created, and that its eternality does not necessitate that the created things are eternal'.

The Ash'aris opined that the attributes of actions are originated, as they are the associations (*ta'alluqāt*) of Allah's power, and these associations are all originated. The exacting scholar Imam Kamāl ibn al-Humām (d. 861/1457) states in *al-Musāyarah*,

The masters of the Hanafis and the Ash'aris have differed over the attributes of actions. What is intended by them are those attributes that indicate efficacy and have names distinct from [His] omnipotence in view of the names of their effects, all of which are classified under the name 'creating' (*takwīn*). If that effect is a created thing (*makhluq*), then the name is the Creator (*al-Khāliq*), and the attribute is creating (*khalq*); if the effect is provision, then the name is the Provider, and the attribute is providing. The later Hanafis, from the time of Abū Maṣṣūr [al-Māturīdī onwards], claimed that these are eternal attributes distinct from the aforementioned attributes [of Allah, namely knowledge, will, omnipotence, etc.]. However, there is nothing in the words of Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله and his early colleagues that is

وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ إِلَيْهِ فَاقِيرٌ، وَكُلُّ أَمْرٍ عَلَيْهِ بَاسِيرٌ.

Everything is in need of Him, and every affair is effortless for Him.

This [statement] means that everything besides Him is in utter need of Him for its existence and continuance, and that nothing exists except by His creating it and nothing subsists except by His sustaining it. He is the All-Sustaining who has made everything dependent on Him; *He is Allah the Self-Sufficient, while you are the ones in need* [of Him] [Qur'an 29:6]. He brings all things into existence by His addressing [them with His command] 'Be!', hence all affairs are effortless for Him; He endures no difficulty in bringing them into existence.

لَا يَخْتَاجُ إِلَى شَيْءٍ.

He does not need anything,

as having a need is a defect, and He is exalted above that. Because all things are powerless under His overwhelming force and only exist by His bringing them into existence, how can He then need anything else when He has described Himself as utterly self-sufficient with His Most

explicit in that regard other than what they [the later Hanafis] inferred from his statement 'He Most High was a creator before creating, a provider before providing'. And they adduced various arguments to back their claim.

The Ash'aris, however, say that the attribute of *takwīn*, in all of its particulars, is none other than the attribute of [His] omnipotence in relation to its association with the specific thing that it is associated with. Hence creating (*takhlīq*) is His omnipotence in relation to its association with the thing created (*makhluq*), and His providing (*tarzīq*) is the association of His power to having that provision (*rizq*) reach [its recipient]. What they, i.e. the Hanafis, said regarding its meaning does not negate this and does not entail that they are distinct attributes that do not return to His omnipotence associated with the above-mentioned; none of their arguments necessitate that. As for their ascribing that to the earlier scholars, then that is questionable. In fact the statement of Abū Ḥanīfah rahimahullāh suggests conformity with what the Ash'aris understood of these attributes, in light of what has been transmitted from al-Tahāwī.

Al-Ghunaymī then continues to explain the above quotation. 'He then cites the aforementioned statement [of al-Tahāwī] verbatim and immediately after it says, "His words 'That is so because He has power over all things' is a justification and an exposition for [Allah] meriting the name the Creator before creation. It thus suggests that the meaning of the Creator when no creation existed in pre-eternity is for Him, who, in pre-eternity, has the power to create. This is precisely the view of the Ash'aris. And Allah alone gives success. [It is stated] in *al-Maṭālib*, 'As for the attribute of *takwīn*, then the doctrine of Orthodox Muslims is that it returns to the associations of His omnipotence and will.'" al-Ghunaymī. *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Tahāwīyyah*, 57–58.

High's saying: *Indeed, Allah is Self-Sufficient, above need of the worlds* [Qur'an 29:6]?

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ، وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ.

There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing [Qur'an 42:11].

He only cited the above [verse] immediately after negating His having need because it is a definitive text, not subject to a variable interpretation. Moreover, it [the above verse] includes the negation of all attributes of creation and characteristics of all originated things, and it affirms [all] attributes of praise and perfection. If the attributes of His actions were originated—as the Ash'aris claim—they would have necessarily been like the attributes of creation in terms of having an origin. However, the above-cited [Qur'anic] text negates similarity.

4

ALLAH'S PREORDINATION



خَلَقَ الْخَلْقَ بِمَعْلَمِهِ، وَقَدَّرَ لَهُمْ أَقْدَارًا.

He brought forth creation into existence by His knowledge and measured for them their portions [in life].

This statement clarifies that whatever happens in the world is by Allah Most High's apportionment (*taqdīr*).⁶⁶ When Abū Ḥanīfah

⁶⁶ The Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah have defined *qaḍā'* as Allah's eternal will associated with things as they are; as for *qadar*, it is the bringing of those things into existence in accordance with Allah's knowledge. We can explain the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah regarding *qaḍā'* and *qadar* in the following manner:

Everything that occurs in this existence—be it good or bad, beneficial or harmful, attractive or repugnant, and so forth—is by Allah Most High's creating and will. Had He not willed to originate anything of that, it would not have come to be. However, this is not at odds with people having a partial free will (*juz ikhtiyār*) in their actions, and that this partial free will may relate [i.e. be utilised] to either committing sin or performing acts of obedience, and that because of this partial free will, the acquisition of actions are ascribed to people. It is as a consequence of [acting upon] this partial free will that one is rewarded or punished, and that moral responsibility (*taklīf*) hinges upon it. This does not entail that a slave is compelled (*majbūr*) in the actions he does, because if he had no choice at all and no will, it would be incorrect for him to be held morally responsible for anything.

If one had no choice whatsoever, then on what basis is reward and punishment consequential? And why is the command to do actions mentioned in the Book and Sunna if a person is compelled to do his actions and has no partial free will to do them? Allah Most High says: *And say: Act! Allah will behold your actions, and [so will] His messenger and the believers* [Qur'an 9:105]. And the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Act, for everyone is facilitated for that which he was created.' Also, if a person had no free will, not even a partial one, it

(may Allah have mercy on him) was questioned about destiny (*qadar*), his response was, 'Allah Most High has clarified [it].' He then read His Most High's saying: *Indeed, everything have We created in proportion and measure* [Qur'an 54:49]. Thus nothing has remained in the world except it is included therein. Furthermore, there are two aspects to *qadar*: [1] the limit (*hadd*) within which each thing emerges into being, in conformity with how He determined it to be: good or bad, beautiful or ugly, wise or foolish. This is what is meant by the '[divine] wisdom' (*hikmah*), which is [His] determining everything according to how it is to be and what befits it; [2] *qadar* is the detailing of every good or bad thing that happens to him and the reward or punishment he receives [in the Afterlife].⁶⁷

وَضَرَبَ لَهُمُ آجَالًا.

He has appointed for them lifespans.

This [statement] verifies the fact that the lifespan fixed for each one of them is final and definite, and it cannot be advanced or delayed. Allah Most High said: *When their term comes, not an hour can they cause delay, nor an hour can they advance* [Qur'an 7:34]. As for His Most High's saying *a term predetermined* [Qur'an 3:145], it has two

would be valid for him to use *qaḍā'* and *qadar* to justify all of his actions and the penal and retaliatory punishments (*qisas*) could not be enforced against him. Nay, he could not even be reprimanded or scorned. The rulings of legal responsibility would become redundant, and there would remain no meaning to reward and punishment.

al-Qaṣṣāb, Muḥammad. *Jawāhir al-'aqā'id*. Damascus: Maṭba' al-'Umūniyyah, 132–133.

⁶⁷ 'Qadar, according to the Ash'aris, is Allah's bringing things into existence according to a particular measure (*qadar*) and a specific way, which He Most High willed. Hence it returns to an attribute of action, since it is an expression of His originating, which is one of [His] attributes of actions. According to the Māturidis, it is Allah Most High's determining in pre-eternity every creation with the definition of its existence, such as beauty or ugliness, benefit or harm, and so forth. In other words, it is His Most High's knowledge in pre-eternity of the attributes of the creation. It, therefore, returns to the His attribute of knowledge, which is one of the attributes of His essence. 'As for *qaḍā'*, then according to the Ash'aris, it is Allah's willing things in pre-eternity, according to how they come to be in the temporal world, hence it is among the attributes of His essence. According to the Māturidis, it is Allah's bringing things into existence with added precision and perfection, hence it is an attribute of action according to them. In summary, *qadar* is temporal and *qaḍā'* is eternal according to the Ash'aris. in contrast to the Māturidis.' al-Bayjūrī, Ibrāhīm. *Tuhfah al-murīd*. 1st edn. Lebanon: Dār Taḥqīq al-Kitāb, 1439/2018, 251.

possible meanings: [1] a predetermined term that is neither advanced nor delayed; [2] a term clarified in the Preserved Tablet wherein it is recorded, similar to His Most High's saying: *And all things We have taken account in a clear record* [Qur'an 36:12].

وَلَمْ يَخَفْ عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ مِنْ أَعْمَالِهِمْ⁶⁸ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَهُمْ، وَعَلِمَ مَا هُمْ عَامِلُونَ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَهُمْ.⁶⁹

None of their actions were hidden from Him before He created them; He knew what they were going to do before He created them.

The meaning of this [statement] is that not a single action of slaves was hidden from Allah before He created them. This, therefore, is a confirmation of Allah Most High's knowledge preceding every being of His creation before their existence, for He Most High, along with His attributes, is eternal, and among His attributes is His knowing in pre-eternity all knowable things before their existence. He only linked His creating with His knowledge of all knowable things because knowing a created thing is a prerequisite for creating [it]. Allah Most High said: *Does He who created not know?* [Qur'an 67:14]; *He is the Creator [of all], the All-Knowing* [Qur'an 36:81]; *And He is Knower of every creation* [Qur'an 36:79]. In all of the above-cited verses, He has linked His creating with His knowledge.

وَأَمَرَهُمْ بِطَاعَتِهِ، وَنَهَاهُمْ عَنْ مَعْصِيَتِهِ.

He ordered them to obey Him and prohibited them from disobeying Him.

He only stated command and prohibition after stating His creating for it to be known that He Most High only created them to be enslaved to His commandments and prohibitions. Allah Most High said: *I have not created jinn and mankind except to worship Me* [Qur'an 51:56], i.e. to command them to worship Me and forbid them from disobeying Me.

⁶⁸ Missing from some manuscripts.

⁶⁹ Another manuscript copy reads *خلقهم* ('He had created them').

Allah's volition

وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ يَخْرُجُ بِقُدْرَتِهِ⁷⁰ وَمَشِيئَتِهِ.

Everything comes about by His power and volition.

Know that, according to Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, anything that is originated, be it good or bad, is by Allah's will, volition and power. Allah Most High said: *When Allah created you and your handwork* [Qur'an 37:96], i.e. your works, without qualification; [Allah is] *creator of all things* [Qur'an 39:62]. Since a slave's action is a thing, He is necessarily its creator; *Say: 'All things are from Allah'* [Qur'an 4:78]. Moreover, Muslim has narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, 'As we happened to be with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, a man in bright white clothes appeared before us ... "Tell me about faith (*īmān*)," [he asked]. He replied, "Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers, the Final Day, and to believe in destiny, its good and evil..."

وَمَشِيئَتُهُ تَنْفُذُ لَا مَشِيئَةَ لِلْعِبَادِ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ لَهُمْ، فَمَا شَاءَ لَهُمْ كَانَ. وَمَا لَمْ يَشَأْ لَمْ يَكُنْ.

His volition is executed. Slaves possess no volition except what He wills for them. Thus what He wills for them transpires, and what He does not will does not transpire,

as attested to by His Most High's saying: *But you shall not will except as Allah wills, the Lord of the Worlds* [Qur'an 81:29]. This is so because in the execution of other than Allah's will and the lack of implementation of His will, there is a sign of His powerlessness, as [that entails] something occurring in His dominion that He did not will, which is impossible concerning Allah.

يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ، وَيَعْصِمُ وَيُعَافِي فَضْلًا. وَيُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ، وَيَخْذُلُ وَيَنْتَكِي عَذْلًا. وَكُلُّهُمْ يَقْلُبُونَ فِي مَشِيئَتِهِ، بَيْنَ فَضْلِهِ وَعَذْلِهِ.

Of His grace He guides, protects and preserves whomsoever He wills. By His justice He leads astray, abandons and afflicts whomsoever

⁷⁰ Another manuscript copy reads بظنيره، بقدره. ('by His allotting and foreordaining').

He wants. All of them are under His volition, alternating between His grace and His justice.

He here explains that slaves cannot claim a right over Allah, whereby it is incumbent on Him to act in their best interests. Rather, He deals with them however He wills, as He owns the universe, and an owner has full right to deal with what is in his possession however he wants. Allah Most High said: *and Allah does whatever He wills* [Qur'an 14:27]; *Allah decrees whatever He wills* [Qur'an 5:1]. The above statement therefore rejects the position of the Mu'tazilah, as they consider it incumbent on Allah to act in the best interests of His slaves. However, one aspect that refutes this position is what He explicitly states in many verses about [His] misleading people, as in His Most High's following words: *Allah misguides whomsoever He wills, and He guides whomsoever He wills* [Qur'an 74:31]; *He misleads many thereby, and He guides many thereby* [Qur'an 2:26]; *And if your Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed* [Qur'an 10:99]; *If He willed, He could have guided all of you* [Qur'an 16:9].

If it were incumbent on Allah to act in the best interests [of people], no one would have been a disbeliever or a sinner in this world, as disbelief and sin are not in the best interests of slaves. Whomsoever He wills to be a believer is thus of His grace, not because he is entitled to that, and whomsoever He wills to be a disbeliever is thus out of His justice. He is not in any way unjust, as injustice is to exercise the right to utilise another's property [without consent]. By contrast, He is merely exercising His right over His property. Indeed, He is not questioned about what He does. Moreover, because to consider it incumbent [on Allah] to act in the best interests [of mankind] implies the nullification of His Most High's saying: *Lord of immense grace* [Qur'an 57:21], as there is no grace in fulfilling a right that is incumbent on Him. Similarly, it implies the nullification of His names the Beneficent (*al-Muḥṣin*), the Bestower of Blessings (*al-Mun'im*), the Beautifier (*al-Muḥmil*) and the Bountiful (*al-Mannān*), as there is no kindness, beneficence or favour in discharging what is an obligation on Him.

لَا رَادَّ لِقَضَائِهِ، وَلَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ،

There is none who can repel His decree (*qadā'*), and none who can postpone (*mu'aqqib*) His judgement.

He intended by this the decree of creating (*qadā' al-takwīn*), which slaves are unable to repel. This is so because His decree being repelled would imply that He is powerless, and that is impossible. The word *qadā'* is mentioned and what is meant by it is ordinance (*hukm*), command (*amr*) and action (*fi'l*). The word *ta'qīb* [from which the active participle '*mu'aqqib*' is derived] means delay (*ta'khīr*). There is no *mu'aqqib* of His ordinance (*hukm*), meaning there is none who can postpone His ordinance, since all of mankind is powerless under His force and might; thus no one can do that.

وَلَا غَالِبَ لِأَمْرِهِ.

Furthermore, there is none who can prevail over His command.

The 'command' could mean 'creating' (*takwīn*). Allah Most High said: *And Our word to a thing, when We have willed it, is simply that We say to it: 'Be!' and it is* [Qur'an 16:40]. This statement negates divinity from others besides Him and affirms His divine unity. The 'command' may also mean 'ordinance' (*qadā'*), in which case the meaning is that no one can overrule Him by force, as He is the One, the Dominator.

أَمَنَّا بِذَلِكَ كُلِّهِ، وَأَبْقَيْنَا أَنْ كُلًّا مِنْ عِنْدِهِ.

We believe in all that, and we are certain that everything is from Him.

In other words, we affirm all of the aforementioned. The demonstrative 'that' in his statement therefore refers to all of what has previously been stated. In mentioning certitude after it, there is an indication that belief in the aforementioned is not by mere blind following (*taqlid*), but rather by textual and rational proofs, a certain knowledge that is not subject to doubt. [The word] *yaqīn* [certitude] is [derived] from *yaqīna al-mā'* when water is said to be settled. The knowledge established by

evidence is thus called *yaqīn* because it is firmly established and settled. Allah Most High said: *Thus also did We show Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he may be of those possessing certainty (mūqinīn)* [Qur'an 6:75]. He referred to him as *mūqin* [one who has *yaqīn*] because he acquired the knowledge by deducing [the existence of] the Maker from the thing made.

MUHAMMAD ﷺ AND HIS DESCRIPTION



Belief in Muhammad's prophethood ﷺ

وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا ﷺ عَبْدُهُ الْمُصْطَفَى، وَأَمِينُهُ⁷¹ الْمُبْتَلَى، وَرَسُولُهُ الْمَرْتَضَى.

[We assert] that Muhammad ﷺ is His chosen slave, His elect trustworthy servant and His messenger with whom He is pleased.

After he finished affirming Allah's unity and His attributes, he began affirming the prophethood of the master of the messengers, Muhammad ﷺ, to complete the faith by the two testimonies. This is because faith (*īmān*) is [defined as] knowing Allah and His names and attributes, and affirming the Sacred Law conveyed by the Messenger. Thus Allah Most High coupled belief in the Messenger with belief in Himself when He said: Say, 'O mankind! I am the Messenger of Allah to you all... So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet' [Qur'an 7:158]. His words '[We assert] that Muhammad...' are conjoined to his words 'Allah is one'. The implied meaning is 'We assert regarding Allah's unity, believing by Allah's enablement, that Allah is one and that Muhammad is His chosen slave.'

⁷¹ Some manuscripts read وَنَبِيّه ('His [elect] prophet').

He only mentioned his attribute of slavehood before his attribute of prophethood in order to dispel the misconception arising in [the minds of] people, when preternatural miracles that are beyond man's power are known to have appeared through him, [whereby they might believe] that he possesses the attribute of divinity. [Such an error would be] similar to the misconception that befell the Christians, where they believed 'Īsā to be divine because they considered those acts that emanated from him, such as reviving the dead, curing the blind and the lepers, to be divine acts. His first sign was speaking in the cradle when he said: He said, *'I am indeed a servant of Allah: He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet'* [Qur'an 19:30]. He [ʿĪsā ﷺ] began by mentioning his servitude to dispel any misconception arising in [the minds of] his people. They, nevertheless, negated his servitude and ascribed divinity to him. The Prophet ﷺ has splendid miracles and manifest signs mentioned in [the works on] the evidentiary signs of prophethood (*dalā'il al-nubuwwah*). He only described him as being selected and trustworthy to draw attention to the fact that Allah Most High only reveals a miracle at the hands of one who is trustworthy and chosen, not a degenerate liar. *Al-Mujtabā* means the chosen one (*mukhtār*), and *al-Murtaḍā* is the one with whom Allah is pleased as His messenger.

Muhammad ﷺ: the Seal of the Prophets

وَحَاتَمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ

[He is] the Seal of the Prophets⁷²

because of, [firstly], His Most High's saying: *Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets* [Qur'an 33:40]. [Secondly,] when rational and

⁷² 'Al-Shihāb ibn Ḥajar defined a prophet as a free male human being to whom a Sacred Law has been revealed, even if he is not commanded to convey it. He defined a messenger as a free male human being to whom a Sacred law is revealed and who is commanded to convey it, whether he has a scripture revealed to him to convey that abrogates the previous Sacred Law or does not; or he conveys the scripture revealed to someone before him and is commanded to call people to it; or he is commanded to convey revelation without a scripture. A messenger, therefore, is more specific than a prophet.' al-Ghunaymī. *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Tahāwīyyah*, 65.

textual proofs have established his message, it is established that he is truthful in what he informs; and he has informed [us] that there will be no prophet after him in his saying 'I am the Gatherer at whose heels people will be assembled.'⁷³ It therefore demonstrates that he is the Seal of the Prophets.

Some of the Prophet's virtues ﷺ and distinctions

وَأَمَامَ الْآتِقِيَاءِ.

[He is] the leader of the God-fearing (*atqiyā*)

because he was sent to guard (*taqwā*) against associating partners with Allah and acts of disobedience, and so the people of his nation are the God-fearing and he is their leader; thus he is the leader of the God-fearing (*atqiyā*). He is, moreover, the leader of the God-fearing because he led the prophets—who are God-fearing—in prayer.

وَسَيِّدُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ.

The master of the messengers

because it has been established in the traditions that he said, 'I am the master of the progeny of Ādam.'⁷⁴ The messengers are included therein, and so he is also their master.

وَحَبِيبُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

The beloved of the Lord of the Worlds,

since by the blessing of his nation's emulating him it is established that they are His loved ones. He Most High said on the tongue of His Prophet: *Then follow me, Allah will love you* [Qur'an 3:31]. Hence his being Allah's beloved is more emphatically established as true. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ relates that one day, as a group of the Companions sat down exhorting one another, the Prophet ﷺ overheard their conversation.

⁷³ Part of a longer hadith narrated by Muslim in the Book of Virtues, and al-Tirmidhi in the Book of Etiquette

⁷⁴ Part of a longer hadith narrated by Muslim in the Book of Virtues.

One of them said, 'How amazing it is that Allah took Ibrāhīm as His Intimate Friend (*khalīl*)!' Another said, 'It is not more amazing than the words He addressed to Mūsā!' Another said, 'Īsā is Allah's word and His spirit!' Another said, 'Allah chose Ādam!' The Prophet ﷺ emerged and said, 'I heard what you have said and your argument that Ibrāhīm is Allah's Intimate Friend, and he is thus; and that Mūsā is one whom Allah saved, and he is thus; and that Īsā is His spirit and word, and he is thus; and that Allah chose Ādam, and he is thus. But I am the beloved of Allah (*Ḥabīb Allāh*), and [I say it] without boasting. Ādam and the rest [of the prophets] are under my banner on the Day of Resurrection. I am the first person to emerge [from the grave] when they are resurrected. I am their spokesman when they come [to meet Allah]. Moreover, I am the dearest of Ādam's sons to my Lord, and [I say that] without boasting.'⁷⁵

وَكُلُّ دَعْوَى النُّبُوَّةِ بَعْدَ نُبُوَّتِهِ⁷⁶ فَفِيَّ وَهَوَى.

Every proclamation of prophethood after his prophethood is misguidance (*ghayy*) and whim (*hawā*)

because when it is established by the definitive text that he is the Seal of the Prophets and that there is no prophet after him, whoever then claims to be a prophet after him merely intends to reject this definitive text and is therefore [a source of] misguidance. It is said *ghawā/yaghwī/ghayyan* when one treads other than the right path. Allah Most High said: *Guidance has been made clear from misguidance (ghayy)* [Qur'an 2:256], i.e. guidance has been clearly distinguished from deviation, faith from disbelief, and truth from falsehood. *Hawā* is an expression of the lower self's desire and its inclination towards falsehood. Allah Most High said: *and restrained his lower self from its desire* [Qur'an 79:40]. That claim [about prophethood] emanates from the desire of the lower self, not from proof, and is thus patently false.

⁷⁵ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī with a similar wording in the Book of Qualities and Characteristics.

⁷⁶ Another manuscript copy reads دعوة نيرة.

Universality of the Prophet's message ﷺ

وَهُوَ الْمُبْعُوثُ إِلَى عَائِمَةِ الْجِنِّ وَكَأَفَّةِ الْوَرَى.

He has been sent to the generality of jinn and all of mankind.

He is therefore the messenger of the two weighty beings (*rasūl al-thaqalayn*). As for the proof that he is sent to the entire mankind, it is His Most High's words: *O mankind! I am the Messenger of Allah to you all* [Qur'an 7:158]; *And We have not sent you but to all of mankind* [Qur'an 34:28]. The claim of some Jews that he is a messenger to the Arabs only is thus proven false. As for the proof that he is sent to all of the jinn, it is His Most High's saying: *Say: 'It has been revealed to me that a company of jinn listened [to the Qur'an]. They said, "We have really heard a wonderful Recital! It guides to righteousness, and we have believed in it [Qur'an 72:1–2]... When we heard the guidance, we believed therein"* [Qur'an 72:13].

بِالْحَقِّ وَالْهُدَى وَبِالنُّورِ وَالضُّبَاءِ.

[Sent] with the truth (*haqq*) and guidance, light and radiance.

The [preposition] 'with' in his words 'with the truth' is connected to his words 'He has been sent'. Its implied meaning is 'He has been sent with the truth (*haqq*) for which the heavens and the earth were created', namely to guide [mankind] to the Maker's unity, submission to [His] commands and prohibitions, and [to the belief in] resurrection after extinction for recompense in the Everlasting Abode. It is also possible that what is intended by *haqq* is the right that Allah has over His slaves, i.e. the legal prescriptions and obligations, and those [rights] which some have over others.

[The meaning of] 'guidance' is 'that which directs [one] to the goal', based on the proof of the occurrence of misguidance in its opposition. Allah Most High said: *those are the ones who have purchased misguidance with guidance* [Qur'an 2:16]. It has also been said that the meaning of 'guidance' is clarification, i.e. the one sent to clarify the right path to creation. Allah Most High said: *Indeed, you guide [people] to a straight path* [Qur'an 42:52]. What is meant by 'light and radiance' is the Sacred

Law supported by magnificent proofs from the Qur'an and the rest of the signs indicating the reality. The link presented in the comparison between 'light' and the 'Qur'an' is evident, as one is guided by it. 'Light' is the radiance of anything radiant, which is the opposite of darkness, and *idā'ah* is extreme luminosity. Radiance is therefore brighter than light, as attested to by His Most High's saying: *He is the One who rendered the sun a radiance and the moon a light* [Qur'an 10:5].

THE QUR'AN: THE ETERNAL WORD OF ALLAH



وَإِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ كَلَامُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، مِنْهُ بَدَأَ بِلَا كُفْيَةٍ قَوْلًا، وَأَنْزَلَهُ عَلَى نَبِيِّهِ⁷⁷ وَخَبَأَ، وَصَدَّقَهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ حَقًّا.

The Qur'an is the Word of Allah (Almighty and Majestic), which appeared from Him as words without modality. He sent it down upon His prophet through revelation, and the believers truly affirmed him in that.

After he finished elucidating divine unity and prophethood, he began elucidating the belief in the Qur'an, as the Sacred Law is dependent on it. It [the Qur'an] is a miracle proving the prophethood [of Muhammad ﷺ]. Nevertheless, since mankind has held divergent views on it [the Qur'an], it is crucial to clarify the truth, this is why he [al-Tahāwī] said, 'The Qur'an is the Word of Allah,' conjoining with his words 'Allah is one'. The implied meaning is 'We assert [regarding Allah's unity], believing [by Allah's enablement], that Allah is one, Muhammad is His chosen slave, and the Qur'an is the Word of Allah'. [It is the Word of

⁷⁷ Another manuscript copy reads رَسُولُهُ ('His messenger').

Allah] because of His Most High's saying: *until he hears the Word of Allah* [Qur'an 9:6]; *They wish to change the Word of Allah* [Qur'an 48:15].

By negating modality, he wanted to both affirm that Allah's speech is beginningless and negate its being of the genus of letters and sounds. The former is a rejection of the [doctrine] the Mu'tazilah and the Karrāmiyyah, while the latter is a rejection of the [doctrine] of the Ḥanbalis. That is so because Allah's speech, like the rest of His attributes, is an attribute of His essence and thus eternal. If it had been originated, it would have either:

1. originated in His essence, as claimed by the Karrāmiyyah, in which case His essence becomes a locus for that which has an origin (*hawādith*), which is impossible; or
2. [subsisted] without a locus, which is also impossible, because speech is an accident (*'araḍ*) that requires a locus; or
3. originated in another locus, in which case the speaker is that locus not its creator.

The view of [some of] the Ḥanbalis that it [Allah's speech] is composed of uncreated letters subsisting in His essence is also false, as letters emanate sequentially, and some are preceded by others, and anything that precedes [another] is originated. Moreover, letters only emanate from organs, i.e. the throat, lips and so forth and therefore entail anthropomorphism. Allah is exalted far above that!

He only said, 'He sent it down upon His prophet through revelation,' because of His Most High's saying: *This Qur'an has been revealed to me, that I might warn you and all whom it reaches* [Qur'an 6:19], and His Most High's saying: *He it is who has sent down to you the Book* [Qur'an 3:7]. He only said, 'and the believers truly affirmed him in that,' because the Companions witnessed it [the Qur'an] being revealed to the Messenger, and they truly realised its inimitability and believed it to be the Word of Allah Most High. They then conveyed it by mass-transmission (*tawātur*) to those who came after them, just as they received it from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and they enjoined creation to uphold its rule in belief and practice; all of which is a proof of their conviction.

وَأَيَقْنُوا أَنَّ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِالْحَقِيقَةِ.

They were certain that it is literally the Word of Allah (Almighty and Majestic).

In other words, they knew with certitude that the Qur'an is literally the Word of Allah Most High, like [His attributes of] knowledge, life and the rest of His attributes.⁷⁸ This [statement] is a rejection of the doctrine of the Mu'tazilah, for they claimed that the Qur'an is only metaphorically referred to as the Word of Allah because He is its creator. We respond: this is patently false because a speaker, in reality, is one who is characterised by speech, not one who creates speech. This is akin to the [fact that] one who is knowledgeable is one who is characterised by knowledge, not one who creates knowledge in others. Indeed, had He been described as One who speaks without being characterised by it, given His being its creator, He would then be described as being black and all other various colours because He is their creator!

فَمَنْ سَمِعَهُ فَرَعَمَ أَنَّهُ كَلَامُ الْبَشَرِ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ.

Whoever hears it and claims that it is the word of man is a disbeliever.

This [statement] is a rejection of the view of the Hypocrites who would criticise it, claiming it to be the word of Muhammad ﷺ that he concocted,

⁷⁸ The noble Qur'an is the speech of Allah, and it applies to two meanings: one of which is the attribute of the Holy Essence [of Allah], and which is not composed of letters and sounds; and the second is the wording (*lafz*) revealed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It is according to the second meaning to which the words of Lady 'A'ishah ؓ, 'What is between the two covers of the *mushaf* is the word of Allah Most High,' refer. This is why Imam al-Nasafi says in his creed:

The noble Qur'an is the uncreated word of Allah Most High. It is written in our copies, preserved in our hearts, recited with our tongues, heard with our ears, without it residing in them. In other words, it does not reside in the copies, the hearts, the tongues and the ears. Rather, it signifies the eternal attribute of Allah Most High's essence. Moreover, it is articulated and heard with words that signify it and memorised with words conceived in one's mind and written in the forms and shapes of letters that signify it, just as one says, 'The fire is a burning substance,' which is said with words and written with the pen, without it entailing the fire being sounds and letters. The theologians have stated that it is not permissible for one to say that the Quran is originated or created except when having to teach, out of fear that the eternal speech (*al-kalām al-naṣī*) of Allah (the eternal attribute of His Most High's essence, which does not consist of letters and sounds) may come to the mind.

not that his Lord revealed it to him. Allah Most High rebuked and threatened those who claimed it to be the word of man with *saqar* (the torment of Hell) when He said, citing [them]: *'This is nothing but the word of a mortal!'* Soon will I cast him into Hellfire (*saqar*) [Qur'an 74:25–26].

فَلَمَّا أَوْعَدَ اللَّهُ بِسَقَرٍ لِمَنْ قَالَ: «إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ»، عَلِمْنَا وَأَيَقْنَا أَنَّهُ قَوْلُ خَالِقِ الْبَشَرِ، وَلَا يُشَبِّهُهُ قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ، وَمَنْ وَصَفَ اللَّهَ بِمَعْنَى مِنَ مَعَانِي الْبَشَرِ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ. فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ هَذَا اعْتَبَرَ، وَعَنْ مِثْلِ قَوْلِ الْكُفَّارِ انْزَجَرَ.

When Allah has threatened whosoever says, *'This is nothing but the word of a mortal!'* [Qur'an 74:25] with *saqar*, we know and are certain that it is the Word of the Creator of humankind, and that the word of man does not resemble it. Whosoever attributes to Allah Most High any human-like qualities is a disbeliever. So whosoever sees this point takes heed and is deterred from repeating the words of disbelievers.

All of the aforementioned is to emphasise the negation of [Allah's] speech being originated and its being of the genus of letters and sounds and hence resembling the speech of creation. Whoever believes the Qur'an to be created and originated and, to be of the genus of letters and sounds has attributed to the Originator human-like characteristics. Such a view is similar to that of the disbelievers who would say that it is the word of a mortal, because of their comparing the Creator to creation. Whoever contemplates, analyses, and understands these meanings takes heed and is thus deterred from repeating the words of disbelievers.

وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِصِفَاتِهِ لَيْسَ كَالْبَشَرِ.

And He knows that Allah Most High in His attributes is not like man,

for the attributes of His essence are eternal, they do not admit cessation. By contrast, human characteristics, like their entities, are originated and admit cessation, termination, modalities and quantities. Allah Most High is exalted above all of that! There is nothing whatsoever like Him.

⁷⁹ Another manuscript copy it reads يَنْبَ ('It [does not] resemble').

THE BEATIFIC VISION



وَالرُّؤْيَا حَقٌّ لِأَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ، بِغَيْرِ إِحَاطَةٍ وَلَا كَيْفِيَّةٍ، كَمَا نَطَقَ بِهِ كِتَابُ رَبِّنَا جَلَّ وَعَلَى: ﴿وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاضِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ﴾، وَتَفْسِيرُهُ عَلَىٰ مَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَىٰ وَعَلِمَهُ، وَكُلُّ مَا جَاءَ فِي ذَلِكَ مِنَ الْحَدِيثِ الصَّحِيحِ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ نَهْوٌ كَمَا قَالَ، وَمَعْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ مَا أَرَادَ.

The beatific vision, without containment and modality, is true for the inhabitants of Paradise, as expressed by the Book of our Lord Majestic and Most High: *Faces on that day bright, gazing upon their Lord* [Qur'an 75:22–23]. Its interpretation is in accordance with what Allah Most High intended and knew. Every rigorously authentic hadith related from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in that regard is as he said, and its meaning is as he intended.

He wanted to establish that the righteous beholding Allah Most High with their eyes in the Everlasting Abode is true. They will see Him without [His being located in] a place or direction, and without any conjunction of rays of light or distance between the beholder and Him Most High. This is what is meant by his words 'and [without] modality'. His aim here is to emphasise that one should simply believe in the beatific vision and not engage in [contemplating] the modality. He only said, 'containment,' because containment—which is to observe [something] from all its sides—is impossible with respect to Allah,

since He is not a body whereby He has limits and is therefore beheld with them. This is how His Most High's saying: *Vision comprehends Him not, but He comprehends [all] vision* [Qur'an 6:103] is to be interpreted.

His words 'as expressed by the Book of our Lord' refer to His saying: *Faces on that day bright, gazing upon their Lord* [Qur'an 75:22–23], and its interpretation is as Allah Most High intended. The [reference to] *gazing* that is annexed to the divine countenance and qualified by the word *at* (*ilā*) is only used when beholding with the physical eye. Interpreting the word *gazing* (*nazar*) to mean anticipating, which spoils the delights of the Everlasting Abode, is repugnant. Moreover, [we have] the following words of His Most High:

1. His Most High's saying concerning the story of Mūsā: *My Lord, show [Yourself] to me, that I may look upon You* [Qur'an 7:143]. How one can adduce it as evidence is [to argue] that Mūsā ﷺ asked his Lord to allow him to see Him, and we do not believe that he would ask for that which he considers impossible. His request [to see Allah] is therefore a proof that he believed it is possible to see Him. Whoever then considers the beatific vision to be impossible has ascribed to Mūsā ignorance of his Creator, and that is disbelief (*kufr*).
2. *For those who do good is the best [reward] (ḥusnā) and more [thereto]* [Qur'an 10:26]. The Prophet ﷺ interpreted *ḥusnā* as Paradise and *more* as gazing upon Allah Most High.
3. *Their salutation on the day when they shall meet Him will be: Peace* [Qur'an 33:44]. The meeting here refers to the beatific vision.
4. *Indeed, from their Lord, that day, will they be veiled* [Qur'an 83:15]. The specifying of disbelievers as being veiled [from beholding Allah] is proof that believers will not be veiled [from beholding Him]; otherwise, it will entail that the righteous will be equal to disbelievers with regard to being veiled.

Examples of such verses demonstrating the possibility of the beatific vision are countless.

As for the rigorously authentic hadiths from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then there is his saying ﷺ 'You shall see your Lord on the Day of

Resurrection just as you see the moon on a moonlit night. You do not doubt having seen it.⁸⁰ What is intended by the comparison between the beatific vision and seeing [the moon] is simply the fact that there is no doubt and disagreement [about them occurring], not a comparison between one object of vision to the other. Moreover, there is his saying ﷺ ‘When the inhabitants of Paradise enter Paradise, Allah (Blessed and Most High) will say, “O People of Paradise! Do you want Me to give you something more?” They will reply, “O our Lord! Have You not whitened our faces? Have You not admitted us to Paradise? Have You not saved us from Hell?”’ He then said, ‘He will thereupon draw the veil. They will not be granted anything more beloved to them than to see their Lord (Blessed and Most High).’⁸¹

They will forget the bliss [of Paradise] when they see Him
Ah what a loss for the proponents of *i'tizāl*!⁸²

لَا تَدْخُلُ فِي ذَلِكَ مُتَأَوِّلِينَ بِرَأْيِنَا⁸³ وَلَا مُتَوَهِّمِينَ بِأَهْوَانِنَا.

We do not engage in that by interpreting [it] with our personal opinion or imagining [it] with our whims.

This [statement] is another rejection of the Mu'tazilah, as they interpreted the word 'at' (*ilā*) here in His Most High's saying *Gazing at (ilā) their Lord* [Qur'an 75:23] as the singular of *al-ālā'*, meaning favour. This is similar to His Most High's saying: *Then which of the favours (ālā') of your Lord will you deny?* [Qur'an 55:13]. The word *gazing*, in this case, lacks the particle 'at'; hence the meaning is 'Some faces that day will be anticipating the favours of their Lord and awaiting them!' This interpretation, notwithstanding its implausibility, is actually false, because interpreting *gazing* as anticipating—which is a cause for sadness, as it has been said, 'Anticipation is red death,' in the abode of delight—is repugnant. Their false illusion and destructive whim induced

⁸⁰ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of Prayer Times.

⁸¹ Narrated by Muslim in the Book of Faith.

⁸² This is a reference to the Mu'tazilah.

⁸³ Another manuscript copy reads بِأَرْثَانَا ('with our opinions').

them to be convinced of this misinterpretation, as they left the clear path and followed their whim.

فَإِنَّهُ مَا سَلِمَ فِي دِينِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ سَلِمَ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَلِرَسُولِهِ ﷺ وَرَدَّ عِلْمَ مَا اشْتَبَهَ عَلَيْهِ إِلَى عَالِمِهِ.

No one's religion is safe except by submitting to Allah (Almighty and Majestic) and His Messenger ﷺ, and consigning the knowledge of what is ambiguous to one to its Knower.

He only stated the above because every Muslim is obliged to submit to whatever has been established from Allah Most High and His Messenger ﷺ, whether he knows the wisdom in that or not. He must not reject that due to his lack of comprehension thereof. People's minds lack the ability to comprehend Allah Most High's wisdom because the human mind is part of this world, so how can it expect to comprehend the divine wisdom? Whoever wants to safeguard his religion must therefore consign the knowledge of whatever he finds ambiguous to Allah—for He is the real knower of the realities of things—and withhold from figuratively interpreting the ambiguous texts.

One group figuratively interpreted [the texts] with their personal opinions, thereby negating the attributes [of Allah] and nullifying them. Another group interpreted them according to their literal sense and fell into anthropomorphic notions about Allah. They either became deniers [of the divine attributes] or anthropomorphists. The due portion of one whose faith is firmly rooted in the ambiguous verses is to refrain from figuratively interpreting them and stop at His Most High's saying: *but none knows its interpretation except Allah* [Qur'an 3:7], as is the position of the early Muslims (*Salaf*). This position is safer than that of the later Muslims (*Khalaf*), who interpreted [such verses] in a manner that neither entails anthropomorphism nor nullification.

وَلَا تُثَبِّتُ قَدَمُ الْإِسْلَامِ إِلَّا عَلَى ظَهْرِ التَّسْلِيمِ وَالْإِسْتِسْلَامِ.

Islam's foot is not secure except on the ground of resignation and surrender,

because Islam is submission to Allah Most High in everything that has been established as coming from Him. A Muslim is therefore one who has made everything purely for the sake of Allah, not associating anyone with Him. The word 'ground' is used as a metaphor, because when he ascribed to Islam a foot—which is not secure except on top of something—he used 'ground' as a metaphor for submission on which Islam's foot settles. Islam is subservience to Allah, and that is only realised by submitting to His rulings and wisdom and not objecting to them.

فَمَنْ رَامَ عِلْمَ مَا حُظِرَ عَنْهُ عِلْمُهُ، وَلَمْ يَفْتَحِ بِالتَّسْلِيمِ قَهْمَهُ، حَاجَبَهُ مَرَامُهُ عَنْ خَالِصِ التَّوْحِيدِ،
وَصَافِي الْمَعْرِفَةِ، وَصَحِيحِ الْإِيمَانِ.

Whoever pursues that knowledge which has been proscribed for him and his understanding is not content with submission, then this pursuit of his veils him from pure monotheism, unadulterated gnosis and genuine faith.

This statement means that whoever is discontent with submitting to what Allah and His Messenger affirmed and seeks access to that knowledge veiled from creation, then his goal is mere arbitrariness and departure from the dictates of Islam. Such a person becomes veiled from pure monotheism, unadulterated gnosis and genuine faith on account of this false notion.

Indeed, whoever knows Allah for His wisdom, perfection and divinity, and knows his self for its weakness, ignorance and servitude, remains under submission, adherence and contentment with what Allah has ordained. He does not seek to know the details of His wisdom. Rather, he consigns the knowledge and wisdom to the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, as a slave does not have the right to access the secrets of the Master. In fact he must submit to Him, *and Allah does whatever he wills* [Qur'an 14:27]; *and Allah judges with whatever He wants* [Qur'an 5:1]. If he is discontent with submitting and seeks to know the reality of Allah's wisdom, despite his mind's inability to comprehend [it], then he will continue to waver between rejection [of faith] and belief. However, there can be no

faith with wavering or Islam with arbitrariness. This is why he said [the following] in his book:

فَيَتَذَنَّبُ بَيْنَ الْكُفْرِ وَالْإِيمَانِ، وَالتَّضَلُّيقِ وَالتَّكْذِيبِ، وَالْإِقْرَارِ وَالْإِنْكَارِ، مُوسَّسًا،

He consequently wavers between disbelief and faith, conviction and rejection, and affirmation and denial, dominated by doubtful whisperings,

i.e. by the whisperings of Satan and his casting doubts in his heart,

تَائِهًا،

lost,

i.e. in the labyrinth of that knowledge which bewilders the minds,

فَائِكًا.

sceptical

about those matters he must submit to,

زَائِعًا،

deviating,

i.e. from the right path,

لَا مُؤْمِنًا مُصَدِّقًا.

neither believing and affirming

whatever has come from Allah with utter submission and consigning the knowledge to Allah,

وَلَا جَاهِدًا مُكَذِّبًا.

nor denying and rejecting.

This is so because denial is incompatible with scepticism and with both sides being equally probable. Allah Most High has informed us that pursuing that which is ambiguous is perversity: *But those in*

whose hearts is perversity pursue the part thereof that is ambiguous [Qur'an 3:7].

In summary, al-Ṭahāwī (may Allah have mercy on him) chose the position of the early Muslims (*Salaf*) concerning the ambiguous verses, which is to refrain from figuratively interpreting them. According to exacting scholars, this position is superior because if a wording has an overriding meaning, but a stronger proof demonstrates that the literal meaning is unintended, we know that what is meant is one of the metaphorical meanings of that reality (*ḥaqīqah*). Since the metaphorical meanings abound and favouring some over others can only be based on inconclusive preponderating proofs, they can only bring about conjecture. However, acting on a speculative proof for a conclusive matter is impermissible; and offering a figurative interpretation [on this matter] entails that. For example, the conclusive proof of it being impossible for Allah to be in a place demonstrates that the literal meaning is unintended in His Most High's saying: *The All-Merciful, who is 'established' on the throne* [Qur'an 20:5]. Because deflecting the wording [*established*] to one of its figurative interpretations through a conclusive proof is inconceivable—and to speak from conjecture about Allah Most High's essence and attributes is impermissible—, it is necessary to remain silent and refrain from figuratively interpreting, and to consign its interpretation to Allah Most High's knowledge, while believing that the literal meaning is unintended. The same [principle] applies to the rest of the ambiguous verses.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ As for narrations that ostensibly unply movement, such as the hadith 'Your Lord "descends" during the last portion of the night...,' Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, in his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, comments on the word 'descent' when attributed to Allah:

Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) said, '[The word] "descent" refers to His acts and not to His essence; rather, that is an expression for His angel descending with His commandment and prohibition.' He then says, 'In summation, it is figuratively interpreted in two ways: either with the meaning that He sends down His command or He sends down His angel with His command. It could also be a figurative expression of His benignity with those supplicating to Him and His answering their prayers and the like.'

al-'Asqalānī, Ibn Hajar. *Fath al-Bārī*. 3rd edn. Beirut: Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1405/1985, 3:23.

وَلَا يَصِحُّ الْإِيْتَانُ بِالرُّؤْيَةِ⁸⁵ لِأَهْلِ دَارِ السَّلَامِ لِمَنْ اخْتَبَرَهَا مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَهُمْ، أَوْ تَأَوَّلَهَا بِقَهْمٍ، إِذْ كَانَ تَأْوِيلُ
الرُّؤْيَةِ وَتَأْوِيلُ كُلِّ مَعْنَى يُضَافُ إِلَى الرُّبُوبِيَّةِ.

Belief in the beatific vision of the inhabitants of the Abode of Peace (*Dār al-Salām*) is incorrect for whosoever considers it according to a figment of [his] imagination (*wahm*) or interprets it with a personal understanding when it relates to interpreting the beatific vision and every quality ascribed to Godhood.

He meant Paradise by the 'Abode of Peace (*Dār al-Salām*)'. Allah Most High said: *And Allah calls to the Abode of Peace* [Qur'an 10:25]. As to why it is called 'the Abode of Peace (*Dār al-Salām*)', there are two possible interpretations: [1] *Salām* is one of the names of Allah Most High and therefore it is ascribed to Him out of reverence for it; [2] it is called 'the Abode of Peace (*Dār al-Salām*)' because whoever enters it will be safe from calamities, flaws and shortcomings that arise in this worldly abode; its meaning, therefore, is the abode of safety (*dār al-salāmah*). There is another possible interpretation for Paradise being named that [*Dār al-Salām*], namely because of the sheer abundance in which they will say the words of 'peace' (*salām*) therein. Allah Most High said: *They will not hear therein vain or sinful discourse. Only the saying, 'Peace, Peace'* [Qur'an 56:25-26]. Furthermore, the angels will greet them with peace. Allah Most High said: *Peace be upon you; you have done well* [Qur'an 39:73].

Belief in the beatific vision is only incorrect for whosoever considers it according to a figment of [his] imagination (*wahm*) because his imagination only relates to something imaginable (*mawhūm*), which is a particular (*juz'ī*) and whose image is imprinted on the senses. This is so because imagination only perceives particulars that are material, and that, in relation to Allah Most High, is impossible. Whoever then considers the beatific vision to be possible according to such a [false] meaning has nullified it and not believed in it.

Similarly, belief in the beatific vision is only incorrect for whosoever interprets it with an understanding [that conceives of it in material

⁸⁵ Another manuscript copy reads *وَأَمَّا لَا يَصِحُّ* ('is only incorrect').

terms], as his understanding is only gained through the mind's contemplation of its quiddity therein; but there is no way for the mind to grasp the understanding of divine quality. The reason for this is that it bewilders the mind; the thoughts and notions of the mind wander aimlessly in the desert of divinity, and the paths and directions of thought are closed from allowing it access to comprehend it. This is why he said that belief in the beatific vision is incorrect except by refraining from interpreting it according to one's imagination and understanding, and without adhering to [state of] resignation concerning the modality of the beatific vision, because divinity is exalted above quiddity comprehensible to the mind and above modality and quantification grasped by the imagination.

أَلَا يَتْرُكُ التَّأْوِيلَ، وَلِزُومِ التَّسْلِيمِ، وَعَلَيْهِ دِينُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ.⁸⁶

[Belief in the beatific vision is incorrect] except by refraining from figuratively interpreting [it] and adhering to resignation. Upon this [principle] is the religion of the messengers based.

This [statement] is an exception to his [earlier] statement 'Belief... is incorrect,' meaning [one's] belief is only correct by refraining from interpreting the modality of the beatific vision and adhering to resignation in that regard. When the Mu'tazilah interpreted [the beatific vision] and claimed that it could only occur with the beholder and the one beheld being face-to-face, and without there being excessive distance or closeness, and with the conjunction of rays of light, they concluded that the beatific vision is impossible. Had they refrained from interpreting the beatific vision and believed in its essence, they would not have fallen into denial.

The religion of the prophets is to refrain from figuratively interpreting [revelation] and adhere to resignation. Allah Most High said: Say, 'Allah's guidance is the [only] guidance, and we are ordered to surrender to the Lord of the Worlds' [Qur'an 6:71]. He Most High said regarding the story of the Intimate Friend [Ibrāhim] ﷺ: When his Lord

⁸⁶ Another manuscript copy reads المسلمين ('Muslims'), and another المرسلين ('messengers'). This entire line is missing from some manuscripts.

said to him, 'Surrender!' he replied, 'I have surrendered to the Lord of the Worlds.' [Qur'an 2:131]. We are therefore obliged to follow them and to adopt their way as guidance. Whoever, out of stupidity, forsakes their way has deviated from the truth. Allah Most High said: *And who forsakes the religion of Ibrāhīm save him who befools himself?* [Qur'an 2:130]. Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ was commanded to follow the religion of Ibrāhīm in His Most High's saying: *Then We revealed to you: Follow the religion of Ibrāhīm, the upright one* [Qur'an 16:123]. Most prophets enjoined their communities to follow the religion of Ibrāhīm ﷺ.

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتَوَقَّ النَّفْيَ وَالتَّشْبِيهَ، ذَلَّ وَلَمْ يُحِصِبِ التَّزْيِيهَ.

Whosoever does not guard himself against negating [the beatific vision] and anthropomorphism will deviate and fail to realise [Allah's] transcendence.

Whosoever does not avoid denying the beatific vision established by the Sacred Law, nor avoids anthropomorphism, which conflicts with reason and scripture, has deviated from orthodoxy and fallen into falsehood. He has failed to realise [Allah's] transcendence, which he seeks by negating the beatific vision and affirming anthropomorphism. Thus are the doctrines of the Mu'tazilah and the anthropomorphists (*mushabbihah*) [respectively].

In summary, the Mu'tazilah denied the beatific vision, claiming that they exalt Allah's essence above being seen as bodies are seen. By contrast, the anthropomorphists affirm that Allah will be seen as bodies are seen; otherwise, it would necessitate nullification (*ta'tīl*) [of Him]. According to them, whatever is immaterial is non-existent. They therefore attempted to exalt Allah Most High above denial by affirming anthropomorphism (*tashbih*) in the beatific vision. Al-Ṭaḥāwī (may Allah have mercy on him) wanted to negate these two doctrines, so he effectively said: whosoever pursues [Allah's] transcendence by negating the beatific vision or affirming anthropomorphism has deviated from the right path. Moreover, such a person has failed to realise [Allah's] transcendence that he was pursuing, and so his endeavour was an utter failure. He alluded to the proof of this with his following statement:

فَإِنَّ رَبَّنَا جَلٌّ وَعَلَا مُوصُوفٌ بِصِفَاتِ الْوَحْدَانِيَّةِ، مُنْعَوْتٌ بِنُعُوتِ الْفَرْدَانِيَّةِ.

For our Lord (Majestic and Most High) is characterised by the attributes of oneness and the qualities of uniqueness.

His being seen is among the attributes of [His] perfection because that which allows the possibility of the beatific vision is that He exists, and it is not impossible for anything that exists to be seen. To say that it is impossible to see Him necessitates the negation of His existence and the affirmation of His nonexistence. Allah is exalted above that! By negating the beatific vision in their desire to affirm divine transcendence, the Mu'tazilah erred and failed to realise their objective. Similarly, it is from His perfection that His attributes do not resemble those of humans, as He is the One, the Supreme, the Dominator and the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can the attributes of His creation in any way resemble His attributes?

In their ascribing direction and place [to Allah], and the similarity of seeing Him to seeing bodies, the anthropomorphists here have ascribed imperfection to His essence and attributes. Allah is exalted far above that! They erred in their claim that their aim in affirming anthropomorphism was to negate the nullification [of Allah's existence]. He alluded to negating the doctrine of the anthropomorphists with his words:

لَيْسَ فِي مَعْنَاهُ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْبَرِيَّةِ.

No one in creation is in any way similar to Him.

Hence what is conceivable in regard to beholding created beings, such as facing one another and the conjunction of light rays, is inconceivable in regard to beholding Allah. The inhabitants of Paradise will merely see Him without enclosure and modality, just as they knew Him in this world without modality and enclosure. This is so because He Most High is Unique and exalted above all forms of composition, as every composite is contingent upon its parts, and every contingent thing is merely possible [in its existence], and every possible thing is originated and cannot therefore be unique and all-sustaining. It is thus established

that the Uniquely Necessary Being, who is One in His essence, cannot exist in space or direction. This is why he said the following:

تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَنِ الْحُدُودِ وَالْعَايَاتِ، وَالْأَرْكَانِ وَالْأَعْضَاءِ وَالْأَدَوَاتِ.

Allah (Almighty and Majestic) is exalted far above having limits, ends, constituent parts, limbs and instruments.

A limit is the characteristic of something finite, which is constricted and powerless under the dominance of that limit, whereas He [Allah] is a dominator and thus cannot be delimited. An end is an expression of having an extremity; constituent parts and limbs are the attributes of bodies, and instruments are the bodily implements. The Eternal, Glorified and Most High, is exalted above all such characteristics!

لَا تُخَوِّدُهُ الْجِهَاتُ السُّتُ كَسَائِرِ الْمُبْتَدَعَاتِ.

The six directions do not enclose Him as they do all originated things,

since He Most High negated from Himself resemblance to anything in His saying: *There is nothing whatever like unto Him* [Qur'an 42:11]. Moreover, to ascribe directionality and spatiality [to Him] implies the ascription of [His] similarity to bodies; and to describe Him as having directions implies the notion of their enclosing Him; and to assert that He exists in a place implies the ascription of His need for that place. All of the aforementioned necessitates that He has an origin and negates His eternity. Directions and places are part of this universe, but He is utterly independent of the universe and its parts. Moreover, because the six directions are created and they are a characteristic of the originated world, they do not apply to Allah, as He is eternal. He existed when there was neither place nor time; Allah existed when there was nothing besides Him. Allah Most High did not exist in directions in pre-eternity, as there were no directions. If He were to become located in [one of the] directions after creating them, He would have changed from what He was and transformed; but change and transformation are signs of having an origin. Allah is exalted above that!

The anthropomorphists, however, adhered to the literal meanings of the sacred texts [that ostensibly suggest anthropomorphic notions about Allah]. The position of the early Muslims (*Salaf*) is to believe

in them and consign their interpretation to Allah Most High, while asserting His exaltedness above anthropomorphism; and not to engage in figuratively interpreting them, but rather to believe that whatever Allah Most High intended [by them] is true. This is the position chosen by al-Ṭahāwī (may Allah have mercy on him).

The position of the later Muslims (*Khalaf*) is that we figuratively interpret them according to what is befitting Allah Most High's essence and attributes, but without claiming certainty that that is what Allah intended, due to the lack of proof necessitating certainty in the intended meaning. They [for example] said that what is meant by His Most High's saying: *And He it is who in the heaven is God, and on the earth God* [Qur'an 43:84] is that His divinity is established in them both, not the establishment of His essence. [Such an interpretation would be] similar to the case where one says, 'So and-so is a ruler among the Arabs and non-Arabs.' And [they said what is meant] by His saying: *And He is the Supreme, above His servants* [Qur'an 6:18] is that He is above [them] in supremacy and rank, not physical elevation and place, as there is no self-praise in that, because even a guard can be above his leader in terms of place! The position of the early Muslims is safer than to proffer an interpretation that maybe unintended [by Allah], whereas the position of the later Muslims is more evidential.

THE PROPHET'S NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION



وَالْمِعْرَاجُ حَقٌّ، وَقَدْ أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ ﷺ.

The Ascension is true. The Prophet ﷺ was taken on the journey by night.

As for the night journey (*isrā'*) from the Sacred Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque, it is established by the [Qur'anic] text, namely His Most High's saying: *Glory be to He who took His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque, whose precincts We blessed*. [Qur'an 17:1]. That [journey] manifested a miracle, for he traversed the distance of two months in a blink of an eye.

وَعُزِّجَ بِشَخْصِهِ فِي الْيَقَظَةِ، إِلَى السَّمَاءِ، ثُمَّ إِلَى حَيْثُ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْعُلَا، وَأَكْرَمَهُ اللَّهُ بِمَا شَاءَ، وَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِ مَا أَوْحَى.

He ascended in person to the heavens while awake, and after that to wherever of the highest celestial realm Allah Most High willed. He honoured him with whatever He willed and revealed to him whatever He revealed.

This [ascension] is established by rigorously authentic hadiths, not the Book [Qur'an]. Among them is what Abū Qatādah related that the

Prophet ﷺ spoke to them about the night he was taken on the journey; he said:

As I was in the Ḥaṭīm—he may have said, ‘in the Ḥijr’—lying down, neither fully asleep nor fully awake, someone [Jibrīl] came to me and split open what is between this and this, and took out my heart. A basin made of gold, filled with faith, was then brought to me, and my heart was washed therein. It was then filled [with the love of Allah] and returned. Shortly afterwards a white animal smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me, placing his step as far as it can see. I was carried on it, and Jibrīl departed with me until he brought me to the worldly heaven. He then sought permission for it to be opened and was asked, ‘Who is this?’ ‘Jibrīl,’ he replied. He was then asked, ‘Who is with you?’ He replied, ‘Muhammad ﷺ.’ He was asked, ‘Has he been sent [for the Ascension]?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’ It was said to him, ‘He is most welcome. He has arrived, and what a wonderful arrival it is!’ Then, when I had finished, lo and behold, there was Ādam. He said, ‘This is Ādam, your father, so greet him.’ I greeted him, and he returned the greeting and said, ‘Welcome, righteous son and righteous prophet...’⁸⁷

Some have opined that the Book also establishes the Ascension, namely His Most High’s saying: *Then he drew nigh and came down until he was [a distance of] two bows’ length or even nearer* [Qur’an 53:8–9]. However, the correct view is that this nearness was in relation to Jibrīl. This [view] is demonstrated by His Most High’s saying: *While he was on the uppermost horizon* [Qur’an 53:7], because when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked Jibrīl to reveal himself in his form in which Allah created him, as he promised him when in the cave of Ḥirā’, Jibrīl ﷺ appeared before him from the East and filled the horizon till the West; then he drew nigh and came down. This is classed as ‘inversion (*qalb*)’.⁸⁸ [In other words,] he, i.e. Jibrīl, then came down and drew nigh to

⁸⁷ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in numerous chapters of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and Muslim in the Book of Faith.

⁸⁸ A rhetorical device where a statement is expressed in reverse order.

Muhammad ﷺ, and he was a distance of two bows or less from him. The meaning is that the Prophet ﷺ was awestruck by his grandeur after seeing him in his original form. Allah therefore returned him to a human form so that he [the Prophet ﷺ] may approach him in order to receive revelation. He said: *He then revealed unto His slave that which He revealed* [Qur'an 53:10], i.e. Allah's slave (namely Muhammad ﷺ), what Allah (Almighty and Majestic) revealed on the tongue of Jibril.

THE PROPHET'S BASIN ﷺ AND INTERCESSION



وَالْحَوْضُ الَّذِي أَكْرَمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِرَبِّهِنَا لِأُمَّتِهِ حَقٌّ، وَالشَّفَاعَةُ النَّبِيَّ ادَّخَرَهَا لَهُمْ حَقٌّ، كَمَا رُوِيَ فِي الْأَخْبَارِ.

His Basin, with which Allah Most High honoured him as succour for his nation, is true. The intercession, which he [the Prophet ﷺ] has reserved for them, is likewise real, as narrated in the traditions.

As for [the textual evidence for the belief in] the Basin, it is what Abū Dharr related from the Prophet ﷺ: 'I asked, "O Messenger of Allah! What are the vessels of the Basin?" He replied, "By the One in whose hand lies my soul, its vessels outnumber the stars in the sky and its planets on a clear dark night. Whoever drinks out of one of them will never feel thirsty. Two aqueducts from Paradise pour [water] into it. Its length is the distance of what is between Oman to Aylah, and its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey.'" (Narrated by Muslim.) Anas ؓ said, 'Someone asked the Prophet ﷺ, "What is al-Kawthar?" He replied, "[It is] a river in Paradise which Allah has granted me in Paradise, whiter than milk and sweeter than honey.'" (Narrated by

al-Tirmidhī.)⁸⁹ He only said, 'succour for his nation,' because people, during their intense thirst due to the sun's proximity to them, will arrive at it and it will be succour [for them] during their hour of need because of the agonies of the situation on the Day of Resurrection. It will be like a thirsty person in the desert who comes across a pool whose water is colder than ice.

As for the [the Prophet's] intercession ﷺ,⁹⁰ it is attested to by what al-Bukhārī and Muslim have narrated from Anas ibn Mālik, who said:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'When it is the Day of Resurrection, people will be surging on one another. They will come to Ādam and ask, "Intercede on behalf of your offspring." He will reply, "I am not worthy of it. However, you should go to Ibrāhīm, for he is Allah's Intimate Friend." They will then approach Ibrāhīm and he will say, "I am not worthy of it. However, you should go to Mūsā, for Allah spoke to him." They will then come to Mūsā and he will respond, "I am not worthy of it. However, you should go to 'Isā, for he is Allah's spirit and word." They will then come

⁸⁹ Many hadiths have been related about the Basin of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, reaching the level of mass-transmission (*tawātur*). In the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* it is related that he ﷺ said, 'My Basin is a month's journey long, its corners are symmetrical, its water is whiter than milk, its smell is more pleasant than musk and its pitchers outnumber the stars in the sky. Whoever drinks from it will never experience thirst' al-Dardīr, Ahmad. *Hāshiyah 'alā Sharḥ al-Kharidah*, 65.

⁹⁰ The Prophet's intercession ﷺ is of various types:

1. his ﷺ intercession in hastening the judgement, in order to relieve the whole of mankind from the prolonged standing and its agony. This is exclusive to him ﷺ;
2. his intercession for groups of believers to enter Paradise without accountability. Al-Nawawī [d. 676/1277] says, 'It is exclusive to him';
3. the intercession for those who are deserving of Hellfire, so that they do not enter it. Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ [d. 544/1149] says, 'This is not exclusive to the Prophet ﷺ,' whereas al-Nawawī had reservations [about it], i.e. because there is nothing explicitly transmitted regarding it;
4. the intercession to release certain believers from Hell. The prophets, angels and righteous believers all jointly exercise this;
5. the intercession for raising the ranks of believers in Paradise. Al-Nawawī allowed the possibility of this being exclusive to him ﷺ;
6. and the intercession for lessening the punishment for whomever deserves permanent dwelling in Hell, as in the case of Abū Ṭālib. It is narrated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imam al-Bukhārī, 'I am the first intercessor and the first of those whose intercession is accepted.' When his uncle Abū Ṭālib was then mentioned in his presence, he replied, 'Maybe my intercession will benefit him and thus render him partial alleviation from Hell...' al-Dardīr, Ahmad. *Hāshiyah 'alā Sharḥ al-Kharidah*, 70.

to 'Isā and he will respond, "I am not worthy of it. However, you should go to Muhammad." I shall thereupon be approached and I shall respond, "I am worthy of it!" I shall then leave and ask permission from my Lord and He will grant me permission, whereupon I shall stand before Him, extolling Him with praises in a manner I am unable to express now, which Allah will inspire me with [on that day]. I shall then fall down in prostration before my Lord, and He will say, "O Muhammad! Lift your head and speak, and you shall be heard! Ask, and you shall be given! Intercede, and it will be accepted!" I shall reply, "My Lord! My nation, my nation!"⁹¹ He will say, "You may leave. Whosoever has in his heart the weight of a seed of wheat or barley of faith, then remove him from it [Hell]... And whoever has in his heart less than the weight of a mustard seed of faith, then remove him from Hell." I shall then do so accordingly."⁹²

Moreover, Jābir related that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'My intercession is for those of my nation who have committed major sins!' (Narrated by al-Tirmidhī.)⁹²

⁹¹ That is to say, accept my intercession for my nation.

⁹² Some western Muslim academics have argued that the Prophet's intercession ﷺ may well be so inexhaustible that it is available to 'righteous' disbelievers. They cite the following hadiths in support of their view: 'Indeed, I hope to intercede on the Day of Resurrection like the number of trees and clay,' and 'My intercession is for those who testify that there is no god but God, sincerely, their heart true to their tongue and their tongue true to their heart.' In addition, the famous Indian-Yemeni scholar Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790) is allegedly said to have argued that 'it is possible' that the Prophet's intercession ﷺ will also include all religious communities, and that the following statement attributed to Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, as cited by Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ in *al-Shifā'*, might refer to the Prophet's intercession for disbelievers who have entered Hell:

When the people of Hell have entered Hell, and the people of Heaven have entered Heaven ... the former shall call out to their Lord and pray to Him, and this will be heard by the people of Heaven. So they ask Adam, and then others, to intercede for them; however, each one offers apologies, until they come to Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, who intercedes for them. This is the Praiseworthy Station.

Nonetheless, a survey of the full quote and the well-known commentaries on Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *al-Shifā'* by Imams Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khafājī (d. 1069/1659) and Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1606) shows that Ibn 'Abbās's statement should not be misconstrued and understood to mean that the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ is for disbelievers; rather, it is for a small group of profligate believers who find themselves in Hell because of the magnitude of their sinfulness in this world. Furthermore, both al-Khafājī and 'Alī al-Qārī argue that the reference to the first part of the testimony of faith entails the second part, as a reference to Islam. See al-Khafājī, Aḥmad. *Nasīm*

THE COVENANT MADE WITH ĀDAM ﷺ AND HIS PROGENY



وَالْبَيْتَانِ الَّذِي أَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ آدَمَ، صلوات الله عليه، وَذُرِّيَّتِهِ حَقًّا.

The covenant which Allah Most High made with Ādam (Allah's prayers be upon him) and his progeny is real.

It [the covenant] is demonstrated by His Most High's saying: *And [remember] when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Ādam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, [saying], 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yes.'* [Qur'an 7:172]. However, since

al-riyād (printed with 'Alī al-Qārī's *Sharḥ al-Shifā*). 1st edn. Cairo; al-Maṭba'ah al-Azhariyyah al-Miṣriyyah. 1327/1909, 2:348–350. Likewise, al-Zabidī's comment is regarding whether the Prophet ﷺ will exercise some of the aforementioned types of intercession exclusively for his nation or is it possible that they extend to the believers of the nations of the previous prophets (peace be upon them), or are those prophets to intercede on behalf of their respective nations. He in no way intends that the Prophet's salvific intercession will be for disbelievers. See al-Zabidī, *Murtadā. Itihāf al-sādah al-muttaqin* 1st edn. Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. 1416/1995, 10:494. As for his interceding on the Day of Resurrection like the number of trees and clay, Imam 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1622) says that it is an expression of the sheer abundance of people attaining his intercession ﷺ. See al-Munāwī, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf. *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*. 2nd edn. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah. 1391/1972, 3:17. These explanations reflect the duty to interpret the aforementioned hadiths in accordance with those verses of the Qur'an and hadiths that categorically state that those who wilfully disbelieve in the Prophet's message ﷺ, after it adequately reaches them, will eternally abide in Hell and that there is no possibility of salvation for them. See the various proofs for this position in chapters 22 and 30 in this work.

the making of the covenant is among the ambiguous matters, scholars, despite affirming it, did not discuss the manner of its occurrence. They nonetheless deemed it necessary to believe in its reality, for the Book [Qur'an] states it.

Shaykh Abū Manṣūr [al-Māturīdī] stated in his *Ta'wīl*,⁹³ citing some of the exegetes, that Allah Most High only said: '*Am I not your Lord?*' when He created Adam ﷺ and brought forth like seeds those of his progeny [born] up until the Day of Resurrection, and posed His question to them: '*Am I not your Lord?*' They replied, 'Yes.'

They [the scholars] thereafter held differing views [on the reality of this covenant]:

1. He made them to the extent that the pen of legal responsibility would apply to the likes of them, meaning He endowed them with life and intelligence. This is the opinion of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī;⁹⁴
2. He posed that question to the souls, not the bodies;
3. He created them in two rows and said, 'These are [destined] for Paradise, and I do not care. And these are [destined] for Hell, and I do not care.' Moreover, He posed to them His words, '*Am I not your Lord?*'
4. He presented to everyone His unity and asked, '*Am I not your Lord?*' He then informed them of their conditions in this world, such as poverty, affluence, lifespans and the like.

⁹³ He is referring to *Kitāb ta'wīlāt ahl al-sunnah* by Imam Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad al-Māturīdī al-Ḥanafī. He [ʿAbd al-Qādir ibn Abī al-Wafāʾ] said in *al-Jawāhir al-Muḥīyiyah* [a compendium of Ḥanafī scholars], 'No book is on a par with it; rather, no previous work in that field comes anywhere near it!'

⁹⁴ Al-Ḥasan ibn al-Yasār al-Baṣrī, Abū Sāʿid, the freed slave of the Companion Zayd ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī, and the grand *tābiʿī*. He was born in Medina towards the end of the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ and was raised in the care of ʿAlī ؓ. He met many of the Companions and became one of the prominent *tābiʿīn*. He was renowned for his knowledge, renunciation of materialism, piety, and enjoining the rulers to righteousness and forbidding them from wrong. Imam al-Ghazālī said about him, 'His speech resembled that of the prophets ؑ the most, and his guidance was the closest to that of the Companions.' He passed away in Basra in 110/728.

DIVINE DECREE AND PREDETERMINATION



وَقَدْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَىٰ فِي مَا لَمْ يَزَلْ عَدَدَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَعَدَدَ مَنْ يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً، فَلَا يَزَادُ فِي ذَلِكَ الْعَدَدِ وَلَا يَنْقُصُ مِنْهُ، وَكَذَلِكَ أَعْلَاهُمْ فِي مَا عَلِمَ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ يَفْعَلُوهُ.

Allah Most High has known from pre-eternity the total number of those who will enter Paradise and those who will enter Hell. This number neither increases nor decreases, as is the case with their actions, which He knew they would do.

He only mentioned this to affirm the vastness of Allah Almighty and Majestic's knowledge and its being beginningless, and affirm [His] decree (*qadā'*) and preordination (*qadar*), so as to eliminate the element of doubt about *qadā'* and *qadar* and dispel the deception of the illusions of the Qadariyyah.⁹⁵ The latter contend that how Allah Most High can punish for what He decreed and preordained. He therefore clarified with his words 'Allah... has known...' that those who enter Paradise

⁹⁵ An early Islamic sect who believed that Allah Most High does not know things before their occurrence. They delved so deep into the matter of Allah's foreordination that they ended up negating it. Another sect was also named thus, and they are the Mu'tazilah. They ascribe human actions to their free will and power and believe that humans create their actions with a power Allah endowed them with. This doctrine, despite its falsity, is nevertheless less aberrant than the former, for that is patent disbelief.

will believe and obey out of their own volition, and He knew their number, and that those who enter Hell will disbelieve and oppose His commandments out of their own volition, not through compulsion and force. It is impossible for the One who created them not to know. [Allah says]: *Should He not know what He created?* [Qur'an 67:14].

When Allah decreed and preordained that for the two parties and issued judgement [on them], it demonstrated that He knew of their number, as decreeing cannot occur without [prior] knowledge. He [says about Himself]: *Not an atom's weight, or less than that or greater, escapes Him in the heavens or the earth* [Qur'an 34:3]. How can He then not know the number of those who enter Paradise or Hell? Similarly, He created their actions and thus knew them.

وَكُلٌّ مَبْسُورٌ لِّمَا خُلِقَ لَهُ.

Everyone is facilitated with that for which he was created.

Jābir ؓ said, 'Surāqah ibn Mālik ؓ came and asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Explain to us our religion."⁹⁶ It is as if we have just been created."⁹⁷ What about [our] works today? [Are they] in accordance with that which the pens have dried out [writing] and which has been preordained, or with what is to come in the future?" He replied, "Rather, in accordance with that which the pens have dried out [writing] and which has been preordained." He asked, "Then what is the point of doing works?" He replied, "Act, as everyone is facilitated with that for which he was created, and everyone will be [judged] according to his actions."⁹⁸ (Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.) In another hadith [the Prophet ﷺ said], 'Act, be moderate and seek the right course of action, as everyone is facilitated with that for which he was created.'⁹⁹

⁹⁶ In other words, what is our belief regarding our actions: are they preordained or not?

⁹⁷ This relates to their lack of knowledge about this matter.

⁹⁸ This wording is not found in the available hadith works. Imams Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, al-Dārimī in *al-Radd alā al-Jahmiyyah*, Ibn Abī 'Āṣim in *al-Sunnah*, and al-Faryābī in *al-Qadar* have nevertheless narrated on the authority of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr al-'Āṣ with the following wording: '... seek the right course of action and be moderate, for the life of an inhabitant of Paradise will be sealed with the works of the inhabitants of Paradise regardless of whatever works he [previously] does; and the life of an inhabitant of Hellfire will be sealed with the works of the inhabitants of Hellfire regardless of whatever works he [previously] does'

وَالْأَعْمَالُ بِالْعَوَاقِبِ.

Actions are [judged] according to their endings,

as attested to by Abū Hurayrah's narration of the Prophet ﷺ saying 'A man does the actions of the inhabitants of Paradise for a lengthy period, and then his life is concluded with the actions of the inhabitants of Hell. Another man does the actions of the inhabitants of Hell, and then his life is concluded with the actions of the inhabitants of Paradise.' (Narrated by Muslim.) Moreover, it has been related, 'A man does the actions of the inhabitants of Hell and thus enters Hell. Another man does the actions of the inhabitants of Hell until the distance of an arm's length or forearm's length remains between him and Hell when suddenly felicity catches up with him, and he thus does the actions of the inhabitants of Paradise and thereby enters Paradise.'⁹⁹

وَالسَّعِيدُ مَنْ سَعِدَ بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، وَالشَّقِيقُ مَنْ شَقِيَ بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى.

The felicitous person is only felicitous by Allah Most High's decree; and the wretched person is only wretched by Allah Most High's decree,

as attested to by what Ibn Mas'ud narrated, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who is truthful and [whose transmitting the revelation is] confirmed, said, "Indeed, the creation of any one of you is gathered in his mother's womb for forty days as a sperm-drop, then a blood clot for the like of that [duration], then a lump of flesh for the like of that. Allah subsequently dispatches to him an angel with four statements:¹⁰⁰ he writes down his provision, lifespan, actions and whether he is wretched or felicitous. The soul is then breathed into him." (Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.)

وَأَصْلُ الْقَدْرِ سِرُّ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فِي خَلْقِهِ، لَمْ يَطْلُغْ عَلَى ذَلِكَ مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَلَا نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ. وَالنَّعْمُ وَالنَّظَرُ فِي ذَلِكَ دَرَبَةُ الْجِدْلَانِ، وَسَلَامُ الْحَرَمَانِ، وَدَرَجَةُ الطُّغْيَانِ.

The nature of destiny is Allah Most High's secret within His creation. Neither an intimate angel nor a prophet sent [by Allah] knows

⁹⁹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of Beginning of Creation, and Muslim in the Book of Destiny.

¹⁰⁰ In other words, four things about the states of the foetus.

of it. Delving into that [secret] and debating about it is a means of abandonment, a ladder to deprivation and a step towards rebellion [against Allah].

Destiny (*qadar*) is [Allah's] determining everything that happens in the universe according to how it is to be: good or bad, beneficial or harmful; and the detailing of everything that happens in accordance with the conventions of the divine decree in each time and place. This is what is meant by the [divine] wisdom and the prior providence in pre-eternity. Allah Most High said: *Indeed, all things have We created in proportion and measure* [Qur'an 54:49]. Human minds are unable to fathom the reality of the divine wisdom, and eyes are constrained from perceiving the lordly secrets. *Qadar* is of the unseen matters which Allah exclusively knows and has concealed from His creation. He neither revealed that to an intimate angel nor a prophet sent [by Him].

Delving into it is a means of abandonment because delving into Allah Most High's wisdom that He has concealed from His creation stems from denial and scepticism, and these are the features of hypocrisy. Delving into it also becomes a means of abandonment because the one abandoned [by Allah] is he who, due to His defiance, has been deprived of [divine] assistance and realising the truth. If he persistently debates on what he is forbidden from discussing, his debating becomes a ladder to being deprived of holding steadfast to the truth. If he persists and does not refrain from his pursuit, he ascends a step towards rebellion, namely exceeding the limit defined for a slave. A slave has no right to challenge his Master's judgements, nor seek to be privy to His secrets. He consequently arranged these statements in this manner.

فَالْحَذَرُ كُلُّ الْحَذَرِ مِنْ ذَلِكَ نَظَرًا وَفِكْرًا وَوَسْوَسَةً.

So exercise extreme caution against that, whether in thought, contemplation or suggestion.

This is an emphatic caution against the quest for knowledge from which slaves have been veiled.

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى طَوَى حِلْمَ الْقَدَرِ عَنْ أَنْامِهِ وَنَهَاهُمْ عَنْ مَرَامِهِ كَمَا قَالَ تَعَالَى فِي كِتَابِهِ: ﴿لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ﴾. فَمَنْ سَأَلَ لِمَ فَعَلَ؟ فَقَدْ رَدَّ حُكْمَ الْكِتَابِ، وَمَنْ رَدَّ حُكْمَ الْكِتَابِ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ.

That is because Allah has concealed the knowledge of destiny from creation and has prohibited them from seeking that goal, as he Most High said: *He will not be questioned as to that which He does, but they will be questioned* [Qur'an 21:23]. Whoever asks, 'Why did He do [such and such]'; has rejected the judgement of the Book; and whoever rejects the judgement of the Book is a disbeliever.

He only prohibited them from delving into [the matter of] destiny because the knowledge of it is inaccessible.

فَهَذِهِ جُمْلَةُ مَا يَخْتَاجُ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ هُوَ مُتَوَرِّقٌ قَلْبُهُ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى.

The above is the summation of what a friend of Allah Most High with an illuminated heart needs.

In other words, only a friend of Allah whose heart Allah has illuminated with certainty knows this, stops at it and acts in accordance with it. Allah Most High said: *Is he whose heart Allah has opened to Islam, so that he follows a light from his Lord* [Qur'an 39:22]. He then said the following in justification of the above [point]:

وَمِمَّا دَرَجَةُ الرَّاسِخِينَ فِي الْعِلْمِ، لِأَنَّ الْعِلْمَ عِلْمَانِ: عِلْمٌ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَوْجُودٌ، وَعِلْمٌ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَفْقُودٌ، فَإِنْكَارُ الْعِلْمِ الْمَوْجُودِ كُفْرٌ، وَادِّعَاءُ الْعِلْمِ الْمَفْقُودِ كُفْرٌ، وَلَا يَتَّبِعُ الْإِيمَانُ إِلَّا يَقْبُولَ الْعِلْمَ الْمَوْجُودَ وَتَرْكُ طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ الْمَفْقُودِ.

It is the rank of those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. For knowledge is twofold: knowledge that is accessible to creation, and knowledge that is inaccessible to them. To deny the accessible knowledge or to claim to have the inaccessible knowledge is disbelief. Faith is only stable by accepting the accessible knowledge and relinquishing the pursuit of the inaccessible knowledge.

The knowledge accessible in this world and found within creation is that which is known through clear signs and splendid proofs. This includes knowledge of the Creator by the signs He has hoisted of His divine unity.

eternality, perfect knowledge, power, wisdom, His exaltedness above attributes of imperfection and signs of origination, and all His attributes of majesty and honour; and like knowledge of all the commandments and prohibitions, as conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ, of the luminous Sacred Law established by the inimitable Qur'an, and the exposition of the lawful and unlawful. This entire range of knowledge is accessible to the creation, and so to deny it is disbelief.

As for that knowledge which is inaccessible to them, it is the knowledge that Allah has concealed from His creation, such as the knowledge of the Unseen which He exclusively knows; and like knowledge of the divine decree, destiny and the rising of the hour, as Allah Most High said: *Say, 'None in the heavens and the earth knows the Unseen save Allah'* [Qur'an 27:65], and He said: *None, but He can reveal when it will occur* [Qur'an 7:187]. Claiming to have such knowledge or pursuing it is also disbelief, as it is to claim to share with Allah that which is exclusively His.

12

THE PRESERVED TABLET AND THE PEN



وَنُؤْمِنُ بِاللُّوحِ وَالْقَلَمِ، وَبِجَمِيعِ مَا فِيهِ قَدْ رُفِعَ. فَلَوْ اجْتَمَعَ الْخَلْقُ كُلُّهُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِيهِ أَنَّهُ كَائِنٌ لَيَجْعَلُوهُ غَيْرَ كَائِنٍ لَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ. وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا كُلُّهُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ لَمْ يَكْتُبَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِيهِ لَيَجْعَلُوهُ كَائِنًا لَمْ يَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِ. جَفَّ الْقَلَمُ بِمَا هُوَ كَائِنٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَمَا أَخْطَأَ الْعَبْدَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبَهُ، وَمَا أَصَابَهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَهُ.

We believe in the Tablet and the Pen and in all that has been recorded therein. If the entire creation were to unite to prevent something that Allah Most High has written therein that it would exist, they would not be able do so. Similarly, if they were all to unite to bring about something that Allah Most High has not written therein, they would not be able to do so. The pens have dried up in [writing] what is going to happen until the Day of Resurrection. Whatever misses a slave was never meant to hit him; and whatever hits him was never meant to miss him.

The Tablet is established by His Most High's saying: *Nay, but it is a glorious Qur'an, [inscribed] in a Preserved Tablet* [Qur'an 85:21-22], and the Pen [is established] by His Most High's saying: *Nun. By the Pen and that which they write [therewith]* [Qur'an 68:1]. It is therefore obligatory to believe in them both. As for belief in all that has been

written therein, it is attested by His Most High's saying: *and of all things We have taken account in a clear Book* [Qur'an 36:12]. It has been said that it is the Preserved Tablet; His Most High's saying: *Every matter, small and great, is on record* [Qur'an 54:53]; and [in light of] what has been narrated from 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit that he said to his son when he was about to die, 'My dear son! You will not find the sweetness of faith until you know that whatever hits you was never meant to miss you; and whatever missed you was never meant to hit you. Indeed, I have heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, "The first of Allah's creation was the Pen, and He said to it, "Write!" It replied, "My Lord! What shall I write?" He replied, "Write the destinies of all things until the Day of Resurrection."'" (Narrated by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.)

'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ relates, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out to us carrying two books in his hands and said, "Do you know what these two books are?" We replied, "No, O Messenger of Allah, unless you tell us." He then said about the one in his right hand, "This is a book from the Lord of the Worlds, wherein are the names of the inhabitants of Paradise and the names of their ancestors and tribes." They were then summed up till their last; thus they never increase or decrease. He then said about the one in his left hand, "This is a book from the Lord of the Worlds, wherein are the names of the inhabitants of Hellfire and the names of their ancestors and tribes." They were then summed up till their last; thus they never increase or decrease." His companions asked, "Then what is the point of performing [good deeds], O Messenger of Allah, if the matter is over and done with?" He replied, "Seek the right course of action and be moderate, for the life of an inhabitant of Paradise will be sealed with the works of the inhabitants of Paradise, even if he [previously] did whatever works he did; and the life of an inhabitant of Hellfire will be sealed with the works of the inhabitants of Hellfire, even if he [previously] did whatever works he did." He ﷺ then said with his hands, meaning he gestured and threw them. He then said, "Your Lord has finished with [His] servants: a party in Paradise, and a party in Hellfire." The rest of the aforementioned wording in the text is entirely related from the Prophet ﷺ: partially verbatim and partially paraphrased; and it does not require commentary.

وَعَلَى الْعَبْدِ أَنْ يَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى قَدْ سَبَقَ عِلْمُهُ فِي كُلِّ كَائِنٍ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ، فَقَدَّرَ ذَلِكَ بِمُسَبِّحَتِهِ تَقْدِيرًا مُخْتَصِمًا مُبْرَمًا، لَيْسَ لَهُ نَاقِضٌ، وَلَا مُعَقِّبٌ، وَلَا مُزِيلٌ، وَلَا مُغَيِّرٌ، وَلَا مُحَوِّلٌ، وَلَا نَاقِصٌ، وَلَا زَائِدٌ، مِنْ خَلْقِهِ فِي سَمَاوَاتِهِ وَأَرْضِهِ.

A slave should know that Allah Most High's knowledge preceded everything in His creation. He, by His will, preordained that precisely and definitively, such that no one among His creation, whether in the heavens or on the earth, can annul, defer, erase, alter, shift, detract from or add to it.

This [statement] is an explicit affirmation of Allah Most High's eternal knowledge and will. Furthermore, it affirms the divine decree and preordination of whatever is in His creation, and the apportionment of everything in accordance with what His infinite wisdom dictates, in terms of whether it is going to be beautiful or ugly, good or evil, an act of obedience or disobedience, affluence or poverty. His words 'no one can defer' (*la mu'aqqib*) mean that there is none to defer what He has decreed. His words up to 'whether in the heavens or on the earth' allude to the fact that He alone decrees, manages and is supreme in His command; indeed, He has no partner in that regard. The verification of the proofs for that has already been mentioned.

ALLAH'S ATTRIBUTE OF CREATING



وَلَا يَكُونُ مُكُونٌ إِلَّا بِتَكْوِينِهِ، وَالتَّكْوِينُ لَا يَكُونُ إِلَّا حَسَنًا جَمِيلًا.

A created thing (*mukawwan*) only exists through His creating (*takwīn*), and [His] creating can only be good and beautiful.¹⁰¹

Know that the terms creating (*takwīn*), producing (*takhliq*), giving existence (*ījād*), originating (*iḥdāth*) and beginning (*ikhtirā'*) are all synonymous, the meaning of which is to bring forth the non-existent from the concealment of nonexistence into the manifestation of existence. He only used the term 'creating' (*takwīn*) in particular to emulate the early Muslims, as they said that creating is not the thing created.

It [*takwīn*] is an eternal attribute of Allah Most High's essence, like all His attributes, and it is [His] creating of the universe and every particle of it at the moment of its [coming into] existence. This is so because the universe originated by Allah's originating it, so had originating not been an attribute of Allah Most High, it [the universe] would not have been originated by His originating it. Furthermore, it [*takwīn*] must be eternal, because if it were originated, it would

¹⁰¹ The following section on Allah's attribute of creating (*takwīn*) is not found in most manuscripts of Imam al-Ṭahāwī's creed.

have required another *takwīn*—since it is supposed that all originated things need Allah's *takwīn*—and it would lead to infinite regress or end with an eternal *takwīn*. Moreover, if it were originated, it would have either: [1] originated in Allah's essence, which would mean it is a locus for that which has an origin, and that is impossible; or [2] if it did not originate in His essence, then creating would not be an attribute of His, because the attribute of something does not subsist in another. If it subsisted in another, then that would be the creator (*mukawwīn*), not Allah.

The position of al-Ash'arī that creating and the [rest of the] attributes of His actions (*ṣifāt al-af'āl*), such as giving life and death, are originated is rejected, as even he accepts that the universe came into existence by [Allah's] address 'Be!' (*Kun*).¹⁰² This is [precisely] creating, and the address 'Be!' is eternal speech that is an attribute of Allah's essence, without there being any disagreement between him and us. For him then to consider creating [to be] originated is a contradiction in his position.

Their [the Ash'arīs'] position that creating is the thing created is also rejected on the ground that creating is an eternal attribute of Allah's essence unlike the thing created. To say that they are one is akin to saying that striking is none other than the person struck. The fact that creating is eternal does not necessitate that the thing created is eternal, since the existence of the thing created is contingent upon the association with [the attribute of] creating at the point of its existence. Its essence is therefore eternal yet its association is originated, similar to all of the eternal addresses (*khiṭābāt*). Since it is established that creating is an attribute of Allah's essence, it can only be good and beautiful.

¹⁰² 'Most Ḥanafī exegetes, among them Imam Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, opined that the existence of things is not associated with Allah's address 'Be!' (*Kun*) but rather with Allah's creating them (*takwīn*). They said that 'Be!' is merely a metaphor for the swiftness and the ease in which Allah brings things into existence. However, some of our shaykhs, like Imam Shams al-A'immaḥ al-Sarakhsī and Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī, contrary to the opinion of the majority, held that this verse is not a metaphor for the swiftness of [His] creating but that He literally spoke this word without any similarity (*tashbīh*) to His creation nor nullification (*ta'tīl*) of His attribute.' Shaykh Zādaḥ. *Nāẓm al-fawā'id*.

فَهَذَا مِنَ عَقْدِ الْإِيمَانِ وَأُصُولِ الْمَعْرِفَةِ وَالْإِعْتِرَافِ بِوَحْدَانِيَّتِهِ¹⁰³ وَرُبُوبِيَّتِهِ، كَمَا قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا﴾.

The aforementioned is from the certainty of faith, the foundations of knowledge, and the recognition of His unity and divinity. It is as Allah (Almighty and Majestic) said: *And the command of Allah is a decree determined* [Qur'an 33:38].

The aforementioned, i.e. all of the beliefs stated earlier about the divine decree, preordination and others are from the certainty of faith. This is so because whoever does not acknowledge that the divine decree and preordination is congruent with what His infinite wisdom dictates has doubted His eternal knowledge and providence, thereby impairing his belief in His divinity. And to ascribe creation to other than Allah implies the nullification of the Maker's oneness in His actions and the affirmation of His having a partner in creating originated things. This is detrimental to the tenets of one's faith. We take refuge in Allah from being abandoned [by Him]!

فَقَوْلُ لِمَنْ صَارَ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى فِي الْقَدَرِ خَصِيمًا، وَأَخْضَرَ لِلنَّظَرِ فِيهِ قَلْبًا سَقِيمًا، لَقَدْ التَّمَسَّ بِوَهْمِهِ فِي تَحْصِي الْغَيْبِ سِرًّا كَيْتَمًا، وَعَادَ بِمَا قَالَ فِيهِ أَفَّاكًا أَيْمًا.

So woe to whosoever becomes an adversary of Allah Most High over [the belief in Allah's] preordination and brings a diseased heart to explore it. In his illusion, he pursued a hidden secret in his exploration of the Unseen. However, on account of what he said about it, he became an incessantly-sinful liar (*affāk athīm*).

This statement is an emphasis and an explicit condemnation of whoever denies [Allah's] preordination. He called such a person 'an adversary of Allah' because it was previously clarified with decisive proofs that establish [Allah's] preordination, so whoever still denies it has, in effect, challenged Allah on what He has affirmed. He has thus become an adversary of His and deserves misery, hence the reason he called him an adversary of Allah. He has only referred to him as someone whose

¹⁰³ Another manuscript copy reads بِتَوْحِيدٍ ('oneness').

heart is diseased, because he doubts that which has been established by definitive proofs, all of which is due to a disease in his heart and his quest for the content of a secret that Allah has concealed from His creation. He has explicitly called him a sinful liar because an *affāk* is someone who lies incessantly, and an *athīm* is a profligate who sins incessantly; that is because he rejects that which Allah has affirmed with definitive proofs.

THE THRONE AND THE FOOTSTOOL



وَالْعَرْشُ وَالْكُرْسِيُّ حَقٌّ،

The Throne and the Footstool are real,

as clarified by Him in His Book.

وَهُوَ جَلٌّ وَعَلَا مُسْتَعْنٍ عَنِ الْعَرْشِ وَمَا دُونَهُ، مُحِيطٌ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَفَوْقَهُ،¹⁰⁴ وَقَدْ أَعْجَزَ عَنِ الْإِحَاطَةِ خَلْقَهُ.

He (Majestic and Most High) is in no need of the Throne and what is beneath it, and He encompasses everything and is above it. He has rendered His creation powerless to encompass [Him].

Allah Most High has mentioned the Throne and the Footstool in His mighty Book, yet He did not elaborate on their reality other than the fact that He said: *His Footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth* [Qur'an 2:255]; *[He is] the Lord of the Great Throne* [Qur'an 9:129]. Some commentators consequently opined that the Footstool is a metaphor for His knowledge, while others opined that the Throne is different from the Footstool. Allah Most High mentioned the Throne qualified by being

¹⁰⁴ The edition of Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghānī al-Ghunaymī's commentary on this creed of Imam al-Tahāwī reads عَمِطٌ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَفَوْقَهُ ('[His knowledge] encompasses everything [of the Throne] and what is above it').

borne and encircled by angels in His Most High's saying: *Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it...* [Qur'an 40:7]. They said that whenever the Throne is qualified by being borne, it is the seat borne and encircled by angels. Some have said that when the Throne is mentioned in an unqualified manner, then it may refer to His dominion (*mulk*). According to our [Māturīdī] scholars,¹⁰⁵ the correct position is that it is not necessary to engage in interpreting anything that the Book and Sunna have affirmed but which has no practical application. Rather, it is necessary to believe in its establishment and the reality of what is intended by it.

He only said, 'He [...] is in no need of the Throne and what is beneath it,' to negate the misconception of His needing to settle on the Throne and spatiality in a particular direction, as the anthropomorphists opine. Indeed, the Throne is originated by His originating it, so before creating it, He did not need a place. If He were to after that settle on it, He would become in need of it, and that is a sign of imperfection. Allah is exalted far above that! He intended by his words 'He encompasses everything' that He encompasses it with His knowledge, not like a container encompassing that which it contains, as that is particular to bodies. Allah is exalted above that! Similarly, by his words 'above it' he meant His being above in terms of rank, might and supremacy, not in terms of place, (as in His Most High's saying: *And He is the Supreme above His slaves* [Qur'an 6:18]), since there is no [cause for] praising oneself other than as being above [others] in supremacy, as even a mere security guard can be above a ruler in terms of place.

وَنَقُولُ: يَا أَللَّهُ اتَّخَذَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا، وَكَلَّمَ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا إِيمَانًا وَتَضَدِيقًا وَتَسْلِيمًا.

We say, with faith, conviction and submission, that Allah befriended Ibrāhīm and addressed Mūsā (*taklīmān*).

¹⁰⁵ One of the primary schools of Sunni theology, affiliated to Imam Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, from Māturīd in Samarkand. He was Ḥanafī in jurisprudence and an independent theologian who elaborated the beliefs of Imam Abū Hanīfah. He was a major authority and a scrupulous scholar. He left behind several important works, including his *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, *al-Maḡālāt*, and his masterly multi-volume exegesis entitled *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*. Farfūr, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. *al-Risālah al-Nāfi'ah wa al-hujjah al-qāṭi'ah*, 5.

The Qur'anic text affirms the above. He only said, 'with faith, conviction and submission,' to dispel the illusion of the Christians, as they considered their calling 'Īsā a child analogous to [His] befriending Ibrāhīm. This is a false analogy because a child is merely from the same genus as his father, but Allah Most High is exalted far above sharing a common genus (*mujānasah*) with humans. As for befriending, it does not entail having a common genus, but rather merely necessitates nearness and honour; hence they differ. He only emphasised His statement 'and addressed Mūsā (*taklīmān*)' with the verbal noun '*taklīmān*', as expressed by the Book, in order for it to be known that He literally addressed him with a speech that is His attribute, thereby eliminating [the notion] that He may have intended a metaphor.

THE ANGELS, THE PROPHETS AND THE REVEALED BOOKS



وَتُؤْمِنُ بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنَزَّلِ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ، وَتَشْهَدُ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا عَلَى الْحَقِّ
الْمُبِينِ.

We believe in the angels, the prophets and the Books revealed to the messengers. Furthermore, we bear witness that they adhered to the clear truth.

This is established by His Most High's saying: *The Messenger believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord and [so do] the believers. Each one [of them] believes in Allah, His angels, His Books and His messengers. [They say] 'We make no distinction between any of His messengers' [Qur'an 2:285].* Belief in the angels is belief that they are spiritual beings that come in the form of living creatures; they descend and ascend to the heavens by Allah's permission; that their delight is in Allah's remembrance; and that they find pleasure in their worshipping and knowing Him: *they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, but do that which they are commanded [Qur'an 66:6].*

As for belief in the prophets, this is to believe that Allah chose them to convey His message and honoured them with carrying the message between Him and His slaves. Apostleship (*risālah*) is not acquired;

rather, it is a gift which Allah grants to whomever of His slaves He wills. Allah Most High said: *Allah knows best with whom to place His message* [Qur'an 6:124]. They [prophets] are protected from sin,¹⁰⁶ and they are superior to angels, and some of them are superior to others. He only mentioned angels and the belief in them before prophets because Allah Most High only reveals to prophets through the medium of angels. Allah Most High said: *Which the Faithful Spirit had brought down, upon your heart, so that you may be of the warners* [Qur'an 26:193–194], hence the reason why he [Imam al-Ṭahāwī] mentioned them first.

As for the belief in the Books, this is to believe that they are a revelation from Allah to His messengers, either by their [directly] hearing from Him without modality or from the angel sent down [with the revelation] conveying it [to them]. Neither a prophet nor an angel has the right to amend their wording (*nāẓm*) or meaning. Furthermore, we bear witness that all the prophets adhered to the clear truth manifested by splendid miracles and compelling proofs.

¹⁰⁶ Infallibility (*ʿiṣmah*) or trust (*amānah*) is a faculty embedded in the self, preventing its person from committing prohibitions. The meaning of this is the belief that prophets are, by disposition, protected from committing sin and outward mistakes, such as adultery and drinking wine, and from inward sins, such as envy and ostentation, whether those sins are major or minor, before prophethood or after it. This is the doctrine of the Ah. al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.

That which is repeatedly mentioned in the Majestic Qur'an of the prophets repenting, seeking forgiveness, fearing and weeping over what they had previously done is not inconsistent with their essential infallibility. That is because the rank of the prophets in their knowledge of Allah, their proximity to Him and their knowledge of His immense sovereignty and might induces them to be fearful, anxious, seek forgiveness and repent from that for which others are not taken to task. [Thus it is] as the saying, 'The good deeds [*ḥasanāt*] of the righteous [*al-abrār*] are the bad deeds of the intimate [*al-muqarrabīn*].' They, due to their high rank and lofty state, see their good deeds as bad, not that they are sins like those of others. Any *dhanb* [literally, sin] that has been ascribed to the prophets, upon them be blessings and peace, in the Majestic Qur'an is of this category, and it is not, in reality, an act of disobedience, nor a mistake. al-Qaṣṣāb, Muḥammad. *Jawāhir al-'uqūd*, 149.

DECLARING THE PEOPLE OF THE QIBLAH TO BE MUSLIMS



وَنُسَمِّي أَهْلَ قِبْلَتِنَا مُسْلِمِينَ مُؤْمِنِينَ، مَا حَاطُوا بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ مُعْتَرِفِينَ، وَلَهُ بِكُلِّ مَا قَالَه وَأَخْبَرَ مُصَدِّقِينَ.

We call those who face our qiblah Muslims and believers, so long as they acknowledge what the Prophet ﷺ conveyed, and are convinced of what he said and informed,

because of his saying ﷺ ‘Whoever prays towards our qiblah and eats our slaughtered animals is from us.’¹⁰⁷ If they acknowledge the Sacred Law and the religion conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ, believe in divine unity and commit themselves to the Sacred Law, we call them believers and we apply all the rulings of believers on them. Moreover, we consider their outward conduct and consign [what is in] their hearts to Allah, in accordance with his saying ﷺ ‘I was sent with the responsibility of [judging people according to] what is evident, while Allah is responsible for [judging them according to] their innermost selves.’¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of Prayer.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) said in *al-Maqāṣid al-Ḥasanah*, ‘The hadīth “I was ordered to judge [people] according to what is evident, while Allah is responsible for [judging them according to their] innermost selves” is widely known among the jurists and jurists. It is, however, not found in any of the well known collections of hadīth. Moreover, al-Iraqī [d. 806/1404] was

He only said, 'so long as they acknowledge what the Prophet ﷺ conveyed,' because merely turning towards our qiblah does not prove that one is a believer, so long as one is not convinced of the Sacred Law conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ. In light of this, the extremists among the Rāfiḍah—who claim that Jibrīl erred in [conveying] the revelation to Muhammad, because [according to them] Allah sent him to 'Alī, with some even going to the extent of saying that he is a deity!—are not believers, even if they pray towards the qiblah.

adamant that it had no chain of transmission (*asīl*), and similarly al-Mizzī [d. 742/1341] and others rejected it.

DEBATING ABOUT ALLAH'S ESSENCE



وَلَا نَخُوضُ فِي اللَّهِ وَلَا نُمَارِي فِي الدِّينِ.¹⁰⁹

We do not engage in [speculative] discussions about Allah (Almighty and Majestic), nor do we dispute about the religion.

The meaning of this [statement] is that we do not speak about Allah's essence and attributes by mere reason without following what the Book and the Sunna have stated, because the default principle regarding Allah's names and attributes is to adhere strictly to revelation. Nor do we delve into contemplating His essence, as it baffles the minds and may lead to denial. Rather, one is to contemplate His acts and creation, as the mind is unable to comprehend the reality of His greatness. If the angels, notwithstanding their being free from the stain of selfish attachments, acknowledged their inability and said, 'We have not truly known You,' then what of man who is associated with attachments and extraneous veils that prevent [his] clear comprehension? Engaging in such discussion could lead to an opinion [about Him] of which He is exalted above, so it is better not to delve therein.

[His words] 'nor do we dispute about the religion' mean that we do not argue with Orthodox Muslims by casting upon them the

¹⁰⁹ Another manuscript copy reads *دين الله* ('the religion of Allah').

obfuscations of heretics, thereby seeking to throw them into doubt and aberrancy. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Whoever shuns disputation when he is wrong, a house on the outskirts of Paradise is built for him. And whoever shuns it, even when he is correct, then it is built for him in its centre. And whoever improves his character, it is built for him in its uppermost part.' (Narrated by al-Tirmidhī.) Moreover, Abū Hurayrah relates, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ once came out as we were arguing with one another about destiny. He became so angry that his face turned red, and he said, "Have you been ordered with this? Or have I been sent to you for this? Those who came before you were only ruined by their frequently arguing with another about their religious affairs and their differing with their prophets. I implore you not to argue with one another about it."' (Narrated by al-Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd.)

ARGUING ABOUT THE QUR'AN



وَلَا تُجَادِلْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ،

We do not argue about the Qur'an.

In other words, [we do not argue about] whether it is created and contingent, or if it is of the genus of letters and sounds. Rather, we believe that it is Allah's intent and speech. Moreover, we do not argue about the ambiguous verses or interpret them as the misguided in order to seek discord, nor do we argue over the variant established canonical readings [of the Qur'an]; instead, we read the Qur'an according to each established reading.

وَنَعْلَمُ¹¹⁰ أَنَّهُ

We know that it,

i.e. the Qur'an,

كَلَامُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ.

is the speech of the Lord of the Worlds, brought down by the Faithful Spirit.

¹¹⁰ Another manuscript copy reads ونشهد ('We testify').

This statement is a rejection of the claim of [certain] heretics that the Qur'an was founded by natural inspiration due to the purity of his essence, and that the Prophet ﷺ would conjure it up in his mind and compose it as Qur'an. The proof of the baselessness of such a claim is His Most High's words: *Indeed, this is a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds, which the Faithful Spirit has brought down* [Qur'an 26:192-193], i.e. Jibril; *Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much inconsistency* [Qur'an 4:82]; *And if you are in doubt concerning that which We revealed to Our slave [Muhammad], then produce a surah of the like thereof* [Qur'an 2:23].

فَعَلَّمَهُ مُحَمَّدًا

He taught it to Muhammad.

In other words, Jibril taught Muhammad.

سَيِّدَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﷺ

The Master of the Messengers ﷺ

[So he taught] the Qur'an that was revealed to him, as attested to by His Most High's saying: *He was taught by one mighty in power* [Qur'an 53:5]. By His explicitly stating that Jibril taught him, it dispels the illusion of the heretics that he would conjure it up in his mind because his nature and disposition dictated that, or that Jibril would inspire him after which he would personally compose orderly speech. The proof of this being false is that Allah Most High explicitly mentioned teaching and instruction (*ta'lim wa talqin*), and being taught by an angel is only through him hearing from him the words and retaining them, and thereafter conveying them to those morally responsible.

وَكَلَامُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، لَا يُسَاوِيهِ شَيْءٌ مِنْ كَلَامِ الْمَخْلُوقِينَ.

No speech of creation compares to the speech of Allah Most High,

as His Most High's speech is an attribute of His essence, eternal and encompassing [all] subtleties. Both men and jinn are incapable of producing anything like its shortest surah. How can the speech of a human, which is originated and prosaic in comparison, then compare to it?

وَلَا نَقُولُ بِخَلْقِهِ.

Nor do we say that it is created.

This statement is a rejection of the view of the Muʿtazilah that the Qurʾan is created. The proof of their belief being false is that Allah's speech is an attribute of His essence. Had it been created, it would entail that His Most High's essence is a locus for that which is originated; but He is exalted above that. This [issue] has already been verified.

وَلَا نُخَالِفُ جَمَاعَةَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ.

We do not oppose the congregation of Muslims

because of his saying ﷺ 'Whoever deviates from the congregation has thrown off the noose of Islam from his neck,'¹¹¹ and because consensus is one of the proofs of the Sacred Law, so opposition to it is deviation and misguidance. Moreover, the Prophet ﷺ enjoined us to adhere to the congregation when he said, 'Adhere to the vast majority.'¹¹² He also said, 'My nation will not agree on an error,'¹¹³ and, 'Whatever the Muslims consider as good is good in Allah's sight.'¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Narrated by al-Ḥākim with a similar wording, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Similitudes, Abu Dāwūd in the Book of Sunna, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Kubrā* in the Book of Insurgents.

¹¹² Narrated by Ibn Mājah in the Book of Tribulations.

¹¹³ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Tribulations, Ahmad, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim and others.

¹¹⁴ This hadith is ascribed to Ibn Maʿūd (*mawqūf*). It is narrated by Ahmad in *al-Musnad* and al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*.

THE IMPERMISSIBILITY OF ACCUSING A MUSLIM OF DISBELIEF



وَلَا نَكْفُرُ أَحَدًا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ بِذَنْبٍ مَا لَمْ يَسْتَحِلَّهُ.

We do not accuse anyone among the people of the qiblah of disbelief for any sin, so long as he does not deem it lawful,

because of his saying ﷺ 'Do not accuse the people of your qiblah of disbelief'.¹¹⁵ What is meant by 'the people of the qiblah' is those who both pray towards the Kaaba and are convinced of the entire Sacred Law conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ. This is why the author previously said, 'We declare those who face our qiblah to be Muslims [...] so long as they continue to acknowledge what the Prophet ﷺ conveyed.' This statement implies that although the extremists among the Rawāfiḍ¹¹⁶ pray towards the qiblah, they are not included in this category. He only said the foregoing to reject the [belief of the] Khawārij,¹¹⁷ who opine that if a Muslim commits

¹¹⁵ Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsat* and, al-Dāraqutnī in *al-Sunan*.

¹¹⁶ The Rawāfiḍ ('Disowners') are one of the major sects of the Shītes who disowned Zayd ibn 'Alī when he forbade them from reviling the Companions. When they realised his stance and his refusal to dissociate himself from the Two Shaykhs [Abū Bakr and 'Umar ﷺ], they disavowed him. This appellation henceforth came to be used for anyone who went to extremes in this doctrine and permitted the vilification of the Companions ﷺ.

¹¹⁷ The first identifiable sect of Islam. Initially, supporters of 'Alī ﷺ, they rebelled against him during the Battle of Ṣīfīn (in modern Syria), when 'Alī's troops were poised to defeat

a major sin, he is no longer a believer and becomes a disbeliever; and [to reject the view of] the Mu'tazilah, who opine that he [who commits a major sin] is no longer a believer yet he is not a disbeliever, but is rather in an intermediate state [between the two positions].

The proof of the falsity of the above [doctrine] is that a believer does not become a disbeliever for [committing] sin because of [the following]:

1. His Most High's saying: *O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance* [Qur'an 66:8]. He commanded sinful believers to repent; as repentance is an expression for returning to Allah by complying with His command after contravention. He also referred to the sinner as a believer, which demonstrates that he is not considered to have departed from the faith [of Islam] due to the sin;
2. His Most High's saying: *If two parties among the believers fall into a fight* [Qur'an 49:9]. He called them believers in spite of one of the two parties having transgressed and committed a major sin!
3. His Most High's saying: *O you who believe! Retaliation has been prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered* [Qur'an 2:178]. He referred to the murderer as a believer in spite of his committing a major sin! He then said: *And for him who is forgiven somewhat by his [injured] brother* [Qur'an 2:178]. Here He referred to him as a 'brother' due to the brotherhood of Islam. Had he become a disbeliever by committing murder, it would not have been legitimate to refer to him as 'brother'!
4. Faith is essentially the conviction in the heart; and although the affirmation [with the tongue] is indicative of it, the locus of the act of disobedience is the limbs. Hence there is no contradiction between

Mu'awiyah's forces ^{٤٦}, and the latter sought arbitration. 'Ali agreed, after which they turned against him. Believing Mu'awiyah and his supporters had apostatised through their rebellion against 'Ali, they held that 'Ali was duty-bound to fight them. The agreement to arbitrate was thus a violation of the Qur'an, rendering 'Ali and his supporters apostates as well. This faction continued to fight against 'Ali's troops, and 'Ali was eventually assassinated by the Khārijī Ibn Muljam on the seventeenth of Ramadan in the year 44 AH. The extreme Khārijī doctrine was that Muslims who commit grave sins effectively reject their religion, entering the ranks of apostates, and therefore deserve capital punishment in this life and eternal damnation in the Afterlife. Moreover, they declared those who disagreed with them on this doctrine to be apostates.

them, as the unity of the locus is a condition for it [contradiction].
So as long as conviction remains, faith remains;

5. righteous actions are not part of faith, so their absence does not negate faith.

The above is the case, assuming he commits a major sin without considering it lawful. However, if he considers it lawful, he has committed disbelief because of his rejecting that which Allah Most High made unlawful with definitive proofs. Allah Most High said: *And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, they are the disbelievers* [Qur'an 4:44].

Response to the Murji'ah

وَلَا نَقُولُ لَا يَضُرُّ مَعَ الْإِيمَانِ ذَنْبٌ لِمَنْ عَمِلَهُ.

Nor do we hold that where there is faith, sin is harmless to whoever commits it.

This statement is a rejection of the doctrine of the Murji'ah.¹¹⁸ Their doctrine is the extreme opposite to that of the Khawarij, as they opine that where there is faith, sins are harmless. By contrast, the Khawarij opine that faith is useless where there is sin. The proof of the falsity of the Murji'ah doctrine is the [Qur'anic] texts and rigorously authentic hadiths demonstrating that major sinners will be punished in commensuration with their sins. These therefore prove that sins are harmful even where there is faith.

نَرْجُو لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ عَنْهُمْ وَيُدْخِلَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ.

We hope for those of the believers who do good that He will pardon them and admit them to Paradise by His mercy.

¹¹⁸ Literally, the Postponers. It was an early Islamic sect that emerged as a reaction to the extreme puritanism of the Khawarij and Mu'tazilah. They believed in the postponement (*urjā'*) of judgment on Muslims who commit grave sins, recognising Allah alone as being able to decide whether or not a Muslim has lost his faith. To them, external actions and utterances did not necessarily reflect an individual's inner beliefs.

In other words, we have hope for believers who do righteous actions that they will be rewarded in the Afterlife by the promise [of Allah]. He only expressed it with the wording 'hope' because righteous actions do not necessitate reward. Rather, the reward is by Allah's grace and mercy. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'None of you will enter Paradise by his actions.' Someone asked, 'Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?' 'Not even I unless Allah receives me with His mercy,' he replied.¹¹⁹ Moreover, a righteous action is merely a means for gaining reward if done [sincerely] for the sake of Allah and is acceptable to Him, which is unknown [to us]. Hence we are uncertain of it and can merely hope for Allah's grace.

وَلَا نَأْمَنُ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَلَا نَشْهَدُ لَهُمْ بِالْجَنَّةِ.

We are not, however, confident of their outcome, nor do we attest to them having attained Paradise.

In other words, we are not confident if the righteous actions of believers may be wiped out by disbelief or hypocrisy, or the reward of their virtuous actions may be wiped out by conceit, ostentation or seeking reputation, as they have no protection against the aforementioned. As long as they are in this life, security against that is unattainable, as what is paramount is how [their] lives are sealed. The story of Bal'am ibn Bā'ūrā is well known [in this regard].¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ahmad narrated it with a very similar wording, al-Bukhārī in the Book of the Sick, and Muslim in the Book of the Description of the Hypocrites.

¹²⁰ He was a scholar from the Bani Isrā'īl, and he is 'the man' referred to in the verse, 'Relate to them the story of the man to whom We gave Our signs, but sloughed them off, so Satan followed him up, and he became of those who lead astray [Qur'an 7:175]. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and others have related that when Mūsā ؑ set out to wage war against the ferocious giants of the land of Bani Kan'an in Sham, the people of Bal'am came to Bal'am. Because the latter possessed the greatest name of Allah, his people implored him to pray to Allah Most High for protection. Yet he told them, 'Woe to you! A prophet of Allah with the angels and the believers [has come against you]! How can I pray against them, when I know from Allah that which you do not? If I were to do such a thing, I would lose both this life and the next.' They kept pressing him to reconsider until eventually, he acquiesced. However, he said, '[I shall not do so] until I consult my Lord.' He would not pray for anything until he received instructions in his dreams. Upon seeking consultation, he was told in a dream, 'Do not pray against them!' When he told his people, they offered him a gift, and he accepted it. Once again, they pleaded for him to reconsider. He agreed to consult his Lord on the matter again. This time he received no instruction; he informed them of this. They then told him that his not receiving any instructions meant that he was not forbidden to pray as they

وَنَسْتَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ

We seek forgiveness for the sinners among them.

In other words, we ask Allah to forgive sinful believers because we have been ordered to seek forgiveness on behalf of one another. Allah Most High said: *Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving* [Qur'an 71:10]. Moreover, the angels and prophets have been ordered to seek forgiveness for believers, so it is obligatory to emulate them.

وَنَخَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ

And we fear for them.

In other words, we fear punishment for sinful believers because Allah Most High has threatened to punish for contravention of His

wanted. Ultimately, he succumbed to their plea, and fell victim to temptation, and proceeded to Mount Hasbān, overlooking the army of Musā ﷺ:

After travelling on his mule a short distance, it knelt. He got off it and hit it, after which it stood up, and he began riding it again. It did not take him very far before it knelt again. He hit it again, after which Allah Most High permitted it to speak. It then made its case against him. It said, 'Woe to you, Bal'am! Where are you going? Do you not see the angels before me, driving me back on my face? Woe to you! Are you going to the prophet of Allah and the believers to pray against them?' Nonetheless, he was not deterred, so Allah Most High released the mule, and it took him to the peak of Mount Hasbān. There he began to pray against them. He would not pray for any evil to inflict them except Allah Most High turned his tongue to [pray against] his people, and he would not pray for any good for his people except Allah Most High turned his tongue to [pray for] Bani Isrā'īl.

His people said to him, 'O Bal'am! Do you know what you are doing? You are only praying for them and praying against us!' He replied, 'I have no control over this. It is something that Allah has taken control over.' Thereupon his tongue stopped and fell over his chest. 'Now that I have lost this world and the next and have nothing but to think of a strategy and ruse. I shall contrive a strategy and ruse for you. Carry the womenfolk with you and beautify them, and give them merchandise. Then send them to the army of Bani Isrā'īl to sell it among them. Furthermore, instruct them that no woman should resist a man who wants his way with her, because if any man fornicates with a woman, you will be relieved of them.'

Bal'am's people did as they were instructed. When the women passed by the men, one of them caught the attention of the head of the tribe of Sham'un ibn Ya'qub. 'He leapt up to the woman and took her by the hand. He was impressed with her beauty. He then proceeded with her until he stopped before Musā and said, "I suppose you will say [to me] that 'She is unlawful for you.'" He replied, "Yes, she is unlawful for you. Do not go near her!" He retorted, "By Allah! We will not obey you." He then took her into his tent and made love to her, whereupon Allah Most High sent upon them a plague. 70,000 of them died within an hour.'

commandments. We therefore ask Allah to forgive them just as we ask Allah to forgive us, and we fear for them just as we fear for ourselves. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Believers are like a single body: when any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.'¹²¹

وَلَا نَقْطَعُهُمْ.

However, we do not cause them to despair.

In other words, we do not cause them to despair of Allah's mercy, in spite of their sins, because despairing of Allah's mercy is one of the characteristics of those who are astray. Allah Most High said: *And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray* [Qur'an 15:56].

وَالْأَمْنُ وَالْإِيْثَاسُ بِتَقْلَانِ عَنِ الْعِلَّةِ.¹²²

Feeling secure and despair dislodge one from the religion.

In other words, feeling secure from Allah's plan (*makr*) and despairing of His mercy dislodge a believer from the religion of Islam to disbelief (*kufr*). This is so because Allah Most High has promised to show compassion and threatened to punish, and He has the power to do both. To feel secure against that which He has threatened implies a presumption that He is unable to punish; and to despair of [Allah's] mercy implies a presumption that He is unable to forgive. Both of these states dislodge one from the religion of Islam. Allah Most High has said: *Are they then secure from Allah's plan? None deems himself secure from Allah's plan save folk that perish* [Qur'an 7:99], and He Most High said: *Indeed, no one despairs of Allah's mercy save disbelieving folk* [Qur'an 12:87].¹²³

¹²¹ Narrated by Muslim with a similar wording in the Book of Righteousness.

¹²² Another manuscript copy reads *بِلِلَّةِ الْإِسْلَامِ* ('the religion of Islam')

¹²³ Both feeling sure of one's safety from Allah's plan and despairing of His mercy dislodge one from the religion of Allah, according to the interpretation of the Hanafis, for they consider both of them to be disbelief. As for the Shāfi'is, they consider these to be enormities, but not disbelief. The interpretation of feeling secure from Allah's plan is that whoever denies Allah's punishing the sinners, then such a person feels secure from Allah's plan and is therefore a disbeliever. As for whoever despairs of Allah's mercy, then since he believes that Allah will not forgive the sins of a repentant Muslim, he is a disbeliever. This is what is meant by them according

وَسَبِيلُ الْحَقِّ بَيْنَهُمَا لِأَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ.

The correct way lies between them for the people of the qiblah.

In other words, [they are] between feeling secure and despair, which is to stand between fear and hope. This is the reality of servitude. Allah Most High said: *They call on their Lord in fear and hope* [Qur'an 32:16], namely fear of His punishment and hope in His mercy and reward. Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ said, 'If the fear of a believer and his hope were to be weighed, they would be evenly balanced.'¹²⁴ The above statement alludes to a rejection of the doctrines of the Khawārij and the Murji'ah. The Khawārij despaired of Allah's reward because of committing grave sins, whereas the Murji'ah felt secure against being punished for committing them. They are at opposite ends of remissness and extremism, whereas the best of affairs is the state of moderation, which is the doctrine of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.

وَلَا يَخْرُجُ الْعَبْدُ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ إِلَّا بِخُورٍ مَا أَذْخَلَهُ فِيهِ.

A [believing] slave does not leave the faith [of Islam] except by rejecting what caused him to enter therein,

because disbelief and faith are opposites: one is not nullified except by doing the other; and because a believer only became a believer and entered the faith [of Islam] through conviction and affirmation. Hence he does not become a disbeliever and leave the faith [of

to the Hanafis. As for feeling secure from Allah's plan according to the Shāfi'is—considered to be an enormity—then it is for one to commit acts of disobedience incessantly, while relying upon Allah's mercy. As for despairing of Allah's mercy, then, according to them, it is for one to be certain that Allah will not have mercy on one for one's sins, but rather will punish one. That, according to them, is also an enormity; neither of them a type of apostasy according to them. In light of this meaning many of the Shāfi'is counted them in the Book of Testimonies (*Kitāb al-shahādah*) among those enormities that vitiate the acceptance of testimony.' Al-Harārī, 'Abd-Allah. *Al-Durrah al-bahīyyah fī hall al-alfāz al-Tahāwīyyah*, 6th edn. Beirut: Dār al-Mashārīf, 2017/1438, 74.

¹²⁴ Al-'Ajlūnī (d. 1162/1749) said in *Kashf al-khafā'*, 'He said in *al-La'ālī*, "This is related from one of the early Muslims (*Salaf*), and it is a sound statement." He said in *al-Durar*, "It has no basis among the *marfū'* hadiths [ascribed to the Prophet ﷺ]. One of the early Muslims merely narrated it. Al-Bayhaqi narrated it in *al-Shu'ab* from Muḥarrif, and he narrated something similar from Shu'bah.'

Islam] except by rejection and denial. Even if he were to commit an enormity, so long as he has sure belief, conviction and faith, he remains a believer. No one is adjudged a disbeliever until it is known from him that he patently denies what rendered him a believer [in the first place].

THE MEANING OF FAITH



وَالْإِيمَانُ هُوَ الْإِقْرَارُ بِاللُّسَانِ وَالتَّصْدِيقُ بِالْجَنَانِ.

Faith is affirmation with the tongue and conviction in the heart.

In summation, the shaykhs held differing opinions as to what is the reality of faith. Shaykh Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī stated:

Faith, in reality, is the conviction in the heart. However, since that which is in the heart is a hidden matter, impossible to determine, the Lawgiver has made the affirmation an indication of it and a prerequisite for the rulings [of the Sacred Law] to be applied in this world. Thus if one were to have conviction in his heart but he did not affirm with his tongue, he would be considered a believer in Allah's sight. This is the case because He Most High knows what is in the hearts and so He knows of his conviction. Such a person is not, however, considered a believer in regard to the rulings [of the Sacred Law] in this world due to the lack of affirmation that is indicative of it [his belief] in relation to us. This is so because we only judge according to what is evident [to us], while Allah is responsible for [judging people according to their] innermost selves. This opinion is transmitted from Abū Ḥanīfah in his book *al-ʿĀlim wa al-mutaʿallim*.

However, both Shams al-A'imma¹²⁵ and Fakhr al-Islām held that the affirmation with the tongue, like conviction, is an integral of faith, except it is an additional integral (*rukn zā'id*) that can be lifted under coercion. By contrast, conviction is a fundamental integral (*rukn aṣlī*) that cannot be lifted under any circumstance. Hence whoever has conviction in his heart but fails to profess with his tongue, without any excuse, is not a believer. To this meaning, the words of the author (may Allah have mercy on him) allude when he said, '[Faith is] affirmation with the tongue and conviction in the heart.'¹²⁶ Actions are not part of the reality of faith, contrary to the position of some scholars who held that faith is conviction in the heart, affirmation with the tongue and actions with the limbs. The latter view is related from al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad and the Literalists (*ahl al-zāhir*). Imam Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī¹²⁷ held that actions are not part of what is termed as faith.

Those who opine that actions are part of faith have differed among themselves. For instance, al-Shāfi'ī said, 'Impiety (*fisq*) does not preclude a sinner from faith.' This statement [of his] is highly problematic because if faith is a term that comprises conviction, affirmation and actions, then it is nullified by the negation of one of its components. The necessary conclusion would be that one no longer remains a believer without works! We, however, argue that actions have been conjoined to faith in many places in the Qur'an. Allah Most High said: *Indeed, those who believe and*

¹²⁵ 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Aḥmad ibn Naṣr al-Halwānī, nicknamed Shams al-A'imma (d. 448/1056). Halwānī is the ascription to *ḥalwā* [confectionery], as he was a confectioner. He was the imam of the Ḥanafīs of Bukhara in his time. Shams al-A'imma al-Sarakhsī (d. 490/1097) studied jurisprudence under him. His works include *al-Mabsūṭ* in jurisprudence and a commentary to *Adab al-qāḍī* [Etiquette of a Judge] by Abū Yūsuf.

¹²⁶ The vast majority of the other Ḥanafīs opined that faith is affirmation and conviction. In other words, affirmation is an integral part of it. By contrast, most Ash'arīs opined that, for whoever can pronounce it, the declaration of faith is a prerequisite for the rulings of being a believer applying on him in this world, and is therefore external to its essence (namely conviction).

¹²⁷ Fakhr al-Dīn, Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn al-Husayn al-Qurashī (born in Rayy, Iran) (d. 606/1210). He was a theologian, exegete, jurist, and author of one of the most authoritative commentaries on the Qur'an in the history of Islam, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (The Keys to the Unseen in exegesis of the Qur'an), and his magnum opus on theology, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-al-muta'akhkhirīn* (Collection of the Opinions of Ancients and Moderns). He excelled and authored in various Islamic disciplines. He died near Herat, Khwarezm.

do good works [Qur'an 19:96]; Who believe in the Unseen and are steadfast in prayer [Qur'an 2:3]; Only he will tend Allah's mosques who believes in Allah and the Last Day and establishes regular prayer [Qur'an 9:18]. What is conjoined is different from that with which it is conjoined.

[Actions, moreover, are not part of faith] because faith is a prerequisite for the validity of actions. Allah Most High said: *And he who does some good works, being a believer [Qur'an 20:112].* A prerequisite is different from that for which it is a prerequisite. Furthermore, when Jibril asked the Prophet ﷺ about faith, he only replied by affirming the things mentioned in that hadith: 'Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His messengers and the Last Day, and to believe in destiny, its good and evil.' He then said, 'This is Jibril who came to teach you the milestones of your religion.' If faith were a term for actions, in addition to conviction and affirmation, the Prophet ﷺ would have clarified it.

وَأَنَّ جَمِيعَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَجَمِيعَ مَا صَحَّ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ مِنَ الشَّرْعِ وَالْيَسَارِ كُلُّهُ حَقٌّ.

The whole of the Qur'an that Allah Most High has revealed and the entirety of the Sacred Law and its exposition that has been authentically transmitted from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is true.

Once it has been established that Allah has revealed the Qur'an and that the Messenger is truthful, it is thereby established that the entire Qur'an and those hadiths authentically transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ elucidating the Sacred Law are true, for he is immune from lying and falsehood. He only stated the above because the comprehensive belief in every detail that has been conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ is impossible, so a general belief is obligatory in order to have faith in everything necessary to believe in. If we were to obligate one to know the details [of the entire revelation], he would be incapable of it. He may omit something that is necessary to believe in, as it is not feasible for a morally responsible person to know comprehensively the details of all the rulings of the sharia.

FAITH NEITHER INCREASES NOR DECREASES



وَالْإِيمَانُ وَاحِدٌ، وَأَهْلُهُ فِي أَضْلَاهِ سَوَاءٌ وَالتَّفَاضُلُ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَةِ وَالتَّقَى وَمُخَالَفَةِ الْهَوَى وَمُلَازِمَةِ
الْأَوَّلَى.

Faith is one, and its people, in principle, are equal. The disparity between them is [only] by fear, God-consciousness, opposition to whim and adherence to what is optimal.

He only stated, 'Faith is one,' because faith is an expression for conviction in everything that the Messenger ﷺ conveyed. There is no disparity between those morally responsible in that regard. He only said, 'its people, in principle, are equal,' to demonstrate that the faith of the inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) and those of the earth (men and jinn) is in principle one. In other words, the conviction in Allah's unity and affirmation of the attributes of His essence and actions, and generally in all that is necessary to believe in, [is one]. All those morally responsible are equal in this regard. Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allah have mercy on him) alluded to this in his book *al-'Ālim wa al-muta'allim* where he stated,

Our faith is like the faith of the angels: we believed in Allah Most High's oneness and His divinity, and whatever has come from Him, in the same way that the angels have affirmed and the prophets and

the messengers have confirmed. From this perspective, our faith is like their faith, though they surpass us in terms of reward for faith and all acts of worship, which are beyond the bases of faith. In fact just as Allah Most High made them [the prophets] superior to the rest of humanity through prophethood, He has likewise made their worship and reward superior. They are the trustworthy slaves of the All-Merciful, and no one among humanity comes close to them in their [level of] worship and fear.

The above [citation] demonstrates that the essence of faith neither increases nor decreases, since its essence is having conviction in all that is necessary to believe in, and that neither increases nor decreases. As for 'increase' that has been mentioned about faith in His Most High's words: *they increase their faith* [Qur'an 8:2],¹²⁸ *that they may add faith to their faith* [Qur'an 48:4],¹²⁹ and other such verses, then it is to be understood as an increase in the fruits of faith by doing righteous actions and the radiance of its light and its clarity.¹³⁰ Allah Most High said: *Is one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam, so that he follows a light from his Lord* [Qur'an 39:22]. [This 'increase'] does not mean an increase in the essence of faith; and [we] thereby apply both proofs. He [Abū Ḥanīfah] alluded to this] with his statement 'Superiority between them and disparity in their ranks is only in terms of the characteristics of faith, such as illumination, radiance, greater certainty, adherence to God-consciousness, opposition to the lower self that is ever enjoining evil, and commitment to what is optimal in word and deed'.

¹²⁸ The full verse is: *Those only are believers who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts quake, and when His revelations are recited to them, it increases them in faith, and in their Lord, they put their trust* [Qur'an 8:2].

¹²⁹ The full verse is: *It is He who sent down the tranquillity into the hearts of the believers, that they may add faith to their faith. To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth; Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise* [Qur'an 48:4].

¹³⁰ The Māturīdīs argued against the Ash'arīs that the 'increase in faith' mentioned in such verses refers to that increase which is commensurate with what one believes in. The Companions believed in the generality [of the revelation], as the Sacred Law had not been complete, and the rulings were gradually revealed. However, this does not necessarily mean that such increase in faith was specific to the time of Prophet ﷺ, because of the possibility of gaining knowledge of such details in other eras.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَأَكْرَمُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَطْوَعُهُمْ وَأَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْقُرْآنَ.

All of the believers are friends of the All-Merciful, and the noblest of them in Allah's sight are those who are most obedient and most committed to the Qur'an.

The proof of this is His Most High's saying: *Allah is the Protecting Guardian (walī) of those who believe* [Qur'an 2:257]. The word *walī* is on the scale of *fa'il* with the meaning of [the active participle] *fā'il*, i.e. Allah is the One who takes care of their affairs and supports them, and is near to them with His assistance, protection, enablement [to do good] and guidance to gnosis. The proof that the noblest of them in Allah's sight are those who are most obedient is His Most High's saying: *Indeed, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most God-conscious of you* [Qur'an 49:13], and his saying ﷺ 'An Arab has no virtue over a non-Arab, nor a white person over a black person, except by God-consciousness'.¹³¹

وَأَصْلُ الْإِيمَانِ هُوَ الْإِيمَانُ بِاللَّهِ، وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ، وَكُتُبِهِ، وَرُسُلِهِ، وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ، وَالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ، وَخَلْقِهِ وَمُرُوءِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى. وَتَحَرُّنُ مُؤْمِنُونَ بِذَلِكَ كُلِّهِ، لَا تَفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَنُصَدِّقُهُمْ كُلُّهُمْ عَلَى مَا جَاءُوا بِهِ.

The essence of faith is to believe in Allah Most High, His angels, His Books, His messengers and the Last Day, and that destiny, its good and evil, its sweet and bitter, is from Allah Most High. We believe in all of the above. We do not differentiate between any of His messengers, and we affirm what all of them conveyed.

When he initially stated that believers, in principle, are the same, he began to expound on the essence of faith and stated, 'The essence of faith is to believe in Allah...' He then elaborated on the matter after having summarised it. The basis for it is the verse: *The Messenger has believed...* [Qur'an 2:285],¹³² and the above-cited hadith of Jibril when he questioned the Prophet ﷺ about faith.

¹³¹ Narrated by Ahmad with a similar wording and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*.

¹³² The full verse is: *The Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord, as do the believers; each one believes in Allah, His angels, His Books and His Messengers, [saying], 'We make no distinction between any one of His Messengers.' They say, 'We hear, and obey. Our Lord, grant us Your forgiveness; to You is the homecoming'* [Qur'an 2:285].

THE FATE OF MAJOR SINNERS



وَأَمَّا الْكِبَائِرُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ فِي النَّارِ لَا يَخْلُدُونَ إِذَا مَاتُوا وَهُمْ مُوَحِّدُونَ، وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونُوا ثَانِيَيْنَ
بَعْدَ أَنْ لَقُوا اللَّهَ عَارِفِينَ مُؤْمِنِينَ.

Those of Muhammad's nation ﷺ who commit major sins will abide in Hell, though not eternally if they die as monotheists, even if they are unrepentant, as long as they meet Allah, knowing and believing [in Him].

If a Muslim commits a major sin and dies unrepentant, yet he is a monotheist, not having associated any partners with Allah, then even though he may enter it [initially to recompense for his sins], he will not eternally abide in Hell. Rather, he will eventually leave Hell and enter Paradise. The above statement is a rejection of the position of the Mu'tazilah that such a person will eternally remain in Hell and will never leave. The basis for this [divergence of opinion] is that whoever commits a major sin is still a believer according to us, whereas according to them, he is not. Hence, according to them, if he is unrepentant, he is a disbeliever and thus eternally abiding in Hell. This issue has already been verified.

According to us, since he is a believer, he will not eternally remain in Hell, and he will ultimately abide in Paradise. Allah Most High said:

As for those who believe and do good actions, they will have the Gardens of Paradise as their abode [Qur'an 18:107]. Such a person is a believer who has done righteous actions, like fasting and prayers, but due to his succumbing to his desires, he has committed a grave sin, while believing in the prohibition [of that sin] and fearing punishment; he will therefore eventually enter Paradise.

He Most High said: *Allah forgives not that a partner should be ascribed to Him, but He forgives anything else, to whom He pleases [Qur'an 4:48].* He differentiated between ascribing partners [to Him] and all else. He informed us that ascribing partners is unforgivable, but He instilled hope in [one attaining] forgiveness for anything else, as He made it contingent upon His will. Indeed, the existence of whatever is contingent upon His will is possible, not impossible. Hence it is possible for Allah to forgive a major sin and not admit him to Hell, or admit him [to Hell] and then remove him from it out of His compassion.

Allah Most High has also said: *But, indeed, your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind despite their wrongdoing [Qur'an 13:6],* i.e. during their wrongdoing. This [verse] demonstrates the possibility of forgiveness before repentance. Moreover, if belief in divine unity can eradicate the disbelief of a hundred years in a moment, then how can it not obliterate the disobedience of a moment? Nonetheless, the [sacred] texts have affirmed that major sinners will suffer torment, so the least that one can hope for is pardon. He Most High said: *Allah forgives all sins [Qur'an 39:53].*

He Most High said: *Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it [Qur'an 99:7-8].* Hence if a person who believes and does righteous actions, but nevertheless commits acts of disobedience, were not to leave Hell, then he would not see the reward of his faith and actions. Moreover, it is necessary to reconcile between the two generalities: either it is said that a major sinner enters Paradise because of his faith and then enters Hell for his disobedience, yet this is false. Or he initially enters Hell [to be recompensed] for his major sin and is subsequently transferred to Paradise; and this is the truth.

وَمَنْ

They,

i.e. the major sinners,

فِي مَشِيئَتِهِ وَحُكْمِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ غَفَرَ لَهُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْهُمْ بِفَضْلِهِ، كَمَا ذَكَرَ هَرَجٌ وَجَلَّ فِي كِتَابِهِ: ﴿وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾.

are under His volition and judgement. If He wills, He forgives and pardons them out of His grace, as He (Almighty and Majestic) stated in His Book: *But He forgives anything else, to whom He pleases* [Qur'an 4:48].

This statement means that one cannot definitively say that major sinners will be punished or rewarded. Nay, the judgement regarding them is that if they die unrepentant, they are under Allah's volition. If He wills, He pardons them out of His grace and mercy or through the intercession of a prophet or a friend of His from among His servants; or if He wills, He punishes them in commensuration with their crime and then admits them to Paradise.

The above statement is a rejection of the position of the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah that their [unrepentant believers] punishment is definite, and that it is impossible for them to be pardoned if they die unrepentant. It is also a rejection of the position of the Murji'ah, who assert that a believer will not enter Hell at all, even if he commits all acts of disobedience and dies unrepentant. He alluded to the rejection of the first position with his words 'if He wills, He forgives them' and, to the rejection of the second position comes with his words:

وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُمْ فِي النَّارِ¹³³ بِعَذْلِهِ، ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنْهَا بِرَحْمَتِهِ وَشَفَاعَةِ الشَّافِعِينَ مِنْ أَهْلِ طَاعَتِهِ، ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُهُمْ إِلَى جَنَّتِهِ، وَذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى تَوَلَّى أَهْلَ مَعْرِفَتِهِ، وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْهُمْ فِي الدَّارَيْنِ

If He wills, He punishes them in Hell out of His justice. He then, out of His mercy, or by the intercession of His obedient slaves who have been granted it, removes them from it and sends them to His

¹³³ Another manuscript copy reads يُلْقَى جَانِبَهُمْ ('commensurate with their offences').

Garden. This is so because Allah Most High takes care of those who acknowledge Him. He did not treat them in both abodes,

i.e. the abode of this world and that of the next,

كَأَقْلٍ تُكَذِّبُهُ

like those who deny Him.

In other words, [He does not treat believers like those] who refuse to acknowledge and believe in Him.

الَّذِينَ خَابُوا مِنْ هُدَايِهِ وَلَمْ يَنَالُوا مِنْ وَلَايَتِهِ.¹³⁴

Those [who deny Him are the ones] who have been deprived of His guidance and were not afforded His protection.

The sacred texts have shown that those who acknowledge [Allah]—namely the Muslims—and those who deny [Him]—namely the disbelievers—are not treated equally in the Afterlife. Allah Most High said: *Do those who commit evil suppose that We shall hold them equal with those who believe and do righteous actions?* [Qur'an 45:21]; *Shall We treat those who believe and do righteous actions the same as those who sow corruption on earth?* [Qur'an 38:28]. Moreover, because wisdom necessitates the superiority of those who acknowledge Him over those who deny Him, if all of them were to remain eternally in Hell, the distinction [between them] would be eliminated, and equality [between them] would be established; hence faith and acknowledgement would be pointless!

The proof that major sinners will be punished and then removed from Hell into Paradise by the intercession of those granted intercession is the saying of the Prophet ﷺ 'As for the inhabitants of Hell who deserve it, they will not die therein nor remain alive. However, the Fire will afflict some people for their sins [or he said, 'for their wrongs'] and Allah will inevitably cause them to die until when they turn to coal, He will permit intercession. They will then be brought forth, one group after another, and spread over the rivers of Paradise, and it will be said, "O inhabitants

¹³⁴ Another manuscript copy reads كَرَامَتِهِ ("His honour").

of Paradise! Pour water over them.” They will thereupon grow like a seed in the foam of a flood.’ (Narrated by Muslim.) And he ﷺ said, ‘A group of people will leave Hell through Muhammad’s intercession ﷺ and will enter Paradise. They will be called the *Jahannamiyyin*.’ (Narrated by al-Bukhārī.)

اللَّهُمَّ يَا وَلِيَّ الْإِسْلَامِ وَأَهْلِيهِ نَبِّتْنَا¹³⁵ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ حَتَّى نَلْقَاكَ بِهِ.

O Allah, O Guardian of Islam and its adherents! Keep us steadfast in Islam until we meet You as Muslims.

He only sought steadfastness in Islam till death because everlasting felicity—namely, to abide perpetually in the Gardens of Paradise in close proximity to the All-Merciful, with numerous kinds of comfort, joy and bounty—is only attained by remaining steadfast in Islam until one meets Allah after death. That is so because what is paramount is how lives are sealed. The prophets (peace be upon them), despite their infallibility, asked for steadfastness in Islam and to die as Muslims. Allah Most High, citing Yūsuf ﷺ, said: *Make me die a Muslim, and unite me with the righteous* [Qur’an 12:101]. It [supplicating for steadfastness in Islam] is therefore more apt for others, and [because] emulating them is a virtue. Furthermore, a believer lies between fear and hope until he dies adhering to the religion of Islam. Hence it is necessary to be concerned about asking for steadfastness in Islam till death.

¹³⁵ Another manuscript copy reads نَكِّنَا (‘enable us to hold on to’).

THE STATUS OF A MUSLIM



وَيُزَى الصَّلَاةَ خَلْفَ كُلِّ بَرٍّ وَفَاجِرٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ، وَعَلَى مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْهُمْ.

We consider it valid to perform the congregational prayer behind any of the people of the qiblah, whether he is righteous or sinful, and [to pray] over whomsoever of them has died.

As for the permissibility of performing the congregational prayer behind them, then it is based on the following:

1. He ﷺ said, 'Perform the congregational prayer behind every righteous and sinful person.'¹³⁶
2. Considering it invalid to perform the congregational prayer behind a sinner gives the impression that one is accusing him of disbelief for [committing] grave sins (the proof of the invalidity of such a position has already been mentioned).
3. The Companions would perform the congregational prayer behind [some of the] Umayyad oppressors.
4. Infallibility [from sins] is not a prerequisite for the validity of leading the prayer, contrary to the position of the Rāfiḍah.

¹³⁶ Narrated by al-Bayhaqi in the Book of Prayer and al-Dāraquṭnī.

As for praying over whomever of them has died, it is established by the Prophet's practice ﷺ when he prayed over Mā'iz, despite stoning him to death for having committed adultery.¹³⁷ Moreover, [it is a duty] because the [funeral] prayer is the right of Islam, and he is a Muslim who has not left Islam by his sinning.

وَلَا تُنَزِّلْ أَحَدًا مِنْهُمْ جَنَّةً وَلَا نَارًا.

We do not assign anyone of them to Paradise or Hell.

In other words, we do not say to anyone that he will be among the occupants of Paradise, in spite of having performed righteous actions, nor [do we say that he will be] among the occupants of Hell, in spite of having sinned, because how a person's life is sealed is an unseen matter, known only to Allah Most High. An immoral person can die righteous and have a good end to his life; and, likewise, a righteous person [can die] immoral and have a terrible end to his life. 'Alī ؑ said, 'Do not assign the humble gnostics to Paradise, nor the wrongdoers to Hell, as it is Allah Most High who assigns them [their abode]

وَلَا نَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكُفْرٍ، وَلَا بِشِرْكٍ وَلَا بِبَغْيٍ، مَا لَمْ يَظْهَرْ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ مِنْ ذَلِكَ.

Neither do we adjudge them guilty of disbelief, polytheism or hypocrisy, so long as nothing of that is manifest from them,

since we [can only] judge based on what is evident, while Allah is [solely] responsible for [judging people according to their] innermost selves. Hence it is only permissible for us to attest to what we know. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'When you know [it] like the sun, testify.'¹³⁸ Moreover, to testify without any evidence thereof is sheer suspicion, yet Allah Most High has said: *Shun much suspicion; for suspicion in some cases is a sin* [Qur'an 49:12].

¹³⁷ Narrated by Muslim.

¹³⁸ Narrated by al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-imān* with the wording from Ibn 'Abbās, who said, "When someone asked the Prophet ﷺ about giving testimony, he replied, "Do you see the sun?" The questioner replied, "Yes." He said, "[If it is] like it, then testify, otherwise leave [it]."

وَنَذِرُ سَرَائِرَهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى.

We leave their innermost selves to Allah Most High,

as only He is fully aware of them, not His slaves; *He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden*. Allah Most High said: Say, 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all' [Qur'an 3:29]. The Prophet ﷺ also alluded to this [meaning] in his saying 'We merely judge [people] according to what is evident, while Allah is responsible for [judging them according to their] innermost selves, and his well known saying 'Did you split open his heart?'

وَلَا نَرَى السَّيْفَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَبَ عَلَيْهِ السَّيْفُ.

We do not consider it legitimate to raise the sword against anyone from Muhammad's nation ﷺ, except against those whom it is incumbent,

because of his saying ﷺ 'I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, "There is no god except Allah."¹³⁹ If they say that, then their blood and wealth is protected from me, except for its due right', i.e. like apostasy, retribution for murder (*qiṣāṣ*) or insurgency.

¹³⁹ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of Faith, and Muslim in the Book of Faith.

REBELLING AGAINST MUSLIM LEADERS



وَلَا تَرَى الْخُرُوجَ عَلَى أَيْمَانِنَا وَأُمُورِنَا وَإِنْ جَارُوا، وَلَا تَدْعُو عَلَيْهِمْ، وَلَا تَنْزِعُ يَدًا مِنْ طَاعَتِهِمْ،
وَتَرَى طَاعَتَهُمْ مِنْ طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى فَرِيضَةً مَا لَمْ يَأْمُرُوا بِمَعْصِيَةٍ.

We do not consider it legitimate to rebel against our leaders and the administrators of our affairs, even if they are tyrannical. Nor do we pray against them or withdraw our obedience to them. We consider obedience to them to be from the obligation to obey Allah Most High, so long as they do not enjoin [us] to disobey [Him].

This is so because infallibility [from sin] is not a prerequisite for the state leader. Even if he is a tyrant, he is not discharged from his office as a leader. To rebel against him—as is the doctrine of the Khawārij—is therefore mere transgression, mischief on the earth and incitement to civil strife between Muslims. Allah Most High said: *Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority* [Qur'an 4:59], without qualification. This latter verse includes the obligation to obey a leader, whether he is upright or not. As is the case with obedience to Allah and His Messenger, the Book establishes obedience to them; hence it is an obligation. We are, however, only required to obey them if they enjoin us to obey [Allah] or to do that in which there is a religious or worldly benefit, so long as there

is no disobedience [to Allah], as attested to by his saying ﷺ 'There is no obedience to creation in disobedience to the Creator'.¹⁴⁰

وَنَدْعُو لَهُم بِالصَّلَاحِ وَالْمَعَانَاةِ.

We pray for their integrity and well-being

because there is hope of [that prayer] being answered, thus resulting in universal benefit for both the leader and the subjects, and the quelling of corruption and civil strife. Supplicating for their well-being is inclusive of religious and physical benefits, since in their physical well-being, there is a widespread benefit, because they are thereby able to engage in jihad, and uproot oppression, disbelief and corruption. Similarly, in their religious well-being, there is a widespread benefit, because if they are righteous, they will encourage the subjects to be likewise, as [the religiosity of] people is commensurate with the religiosity of their rulers.

وَتَتَّبِعُ السُّنَّةَ وَالْجَمَاعَةَ،

We follow the Sunna and the Congregation (*jamā'ah*),

for the 'Sunna' is the path trodden in religion that leads to every felicity, attainment of degrees [in Paradise] and salvation from torments. The 'Congregation' refers to the Companions [of the Prophet ﷺ] and those who follow them in excellence. Following them is [a means to] guidance, [as the Prophet ﷺ said], 'Whomsoever of them you follow, you will be guided,' and opposition to them is an innovation and [a means to] misguidance. The Prophet ﷺ exhorted [us] to follow the Sunna and the Congregation in his saying 'Adhere to my *sunnah* and the *sunnah* of the rightly-guided caliphs after me'¹⁴¹ and 'Whoever deviates a hand's span from the Congregation has thrown off the noose of Islam from his neck'.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Al-Shihāb narrated it in his *Musnad*, Ahmad, al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsaf*, and others, with the wording 'There is no obedience to a created being in disobedience to the Creator'.

¹⁴¹ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Knowledge, Abū Dāwūd in the Book of Sunna, and Ibn Mājah in his Introduction.

¹⁴² Part of a longer hadith narrated by al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Similitudes (*Amthāl*), al-Bukhārī in the Book of Tribulations and Muslim in the Book of Leadership.

وَتُجْتَنَبُ الشُّذُودُ وَالْخِلَافُ وَالْفُرْقَةُ،

We avoid dissent, opposition and sectarianism

because of his saying ﷺ 'Whoever then dissents will dissent into Hell'.¹⁴³ Moreover, the Prophet ﷺ urged us to adhere to following the Congregation and forbade [us] from following innovations and dissenting from the Congregation. One of the companions related, 'One day, the Prophet ﷺ approached and admonished us with an eloquent admonition whereby [our] eyes flowed with tears, and our hearts trembled with fear. A man remarked, "O Messenger of Allah! It is as if this is a farewell admonition, so what do you entrust us with?" He said, "I counsel you to have God-consciousness and to listen and obey [your leader], even if he happens to be a slave. Whoever of you outlives me will see many disagreements, so you must adhere to my *sunnah* and the *sunnah* of the rightly-guided caliphs who take the right way. Hold and bite onto it with the molar teeth. Beware of newly introduced matters, for every newly introduced matter is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance.'" (Narrated by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.)

وَنُحِبُّ أَهْلَ الْعَدْلِ وَالْأَمَانَةِ وَنُبْغِضُ أَهْلَ الْجَوْرِ وَالْخِيَانَةِ.

We love those who are just and trustworthy, and we detest those who are oppressive and treacherous.

He intended by 'those who are just and trustworthy' as those among the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, who adhere to the truth, as well as governors and rulers who uphold justice and discharge the trust that is incumbent upon them. He meant by the 'treacherous' the rival schismatics (*ahl al-khilāf*); and [by] 'those who are oppressive' tyrannical governors who transgress, sow corruption and betray the rights [of others] which their office requires them to uphold. What is meant by loving and detesting them is loving and detesting their actions, not their persons. Allah Most High has enjoined justice, hence the reason it is loveable, and He has prohibited rebellion and oppression, hence

¹⁴³ Narrated by al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak*.

the reason they are loathsome. Allah Most High said: *Allah enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to kindred, and forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorts you so that you may take heed* [Qur'an 16:90].

وَنَقُولُ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ فِيمَا اشْتَبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَعِلْمُهُ.

We say, 'Allah knows best,' regarding knowledge of that which we find ambiguous.

He only stated the above so that one does not doubt the beliefs we have mentioned when he finds something ambiguous, or a question comes to his mind which he is unable to suppress. At such a point, it becomes necessary for him to consign that matter and the knowledge of it to Allah, for only He truly knows the reality of things: *not an atom's weight in the heavens or the earth escapes His knowledge* [Qur'an 34:3]. Man cannot know the reality of the subtleties of things and their realities except through instruction, inspiration and enablement from Allah. Even the angels, notwithstanding their purity, acknowledged their inability to truly know, when they said: *We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us* [Qur'an 2:32]. How is it then possible for man [to have such all-encompassing knowledge], considering his distractions from devoting to the Holy Presence (*janāb al-quds*)? Allah Most High has said: *You have been given of knowledge nothing except a little* [Qur'an 17:85], and: *while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He wills* [Qur'an 2:255]. People's minds are unable to comprehend many things. Therefore, if one finds something ambiguous, he must consign the knowledge of that to Allah and say, 'Allah knows best,' due to His Most High's saying: *I confide my cause to Allah; Allah is Seer of [His] slaves* [Qur'an 40:44].

WIPING OVER FOOTWEAR



وَمَرَى الْمَسْحَ عَلَى الْخُفَيْنِ فِي السَّفَرِ وَالْحَضَرِ كَمَا جَاءَ فِي الْأَثَرِ.

We consider it valid to wipe over footwear when travelling and resident, as has been related in the traditions.

He only stated this to refute the position of the Rāfidah, as they rejected the validity of wiping over footwear. Although this is a legal ruling, but due to the well-known traditions about it, it has been associated with creed to counter those who controvert [it]. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī said,¹⁴⁴ 'I fear for whosoever does not consider it valid to wipe over footwear that he may have committed disbelief.'

¹⁴⁴ 'Ubayd-Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Karkhī. A jurist who was the foremost Hanafī scholar in Iraq. He passed away in Baghdad in 340/952.

HAJJ AND JIHAD



وَالْحَجُّ وَالْجِهَادُ مَا خَبِيَانِ.

Hajj and jihad are perpetual.

He only mentioned them in particular because they are the most arduous acts of worship. They are only accomplished by expending wealth that is dear to one, fear of loss of life, parting with family and home, separation from loved ones, and brethren. Moreover, [people's] spirits are opposed to enduring such emotional hardships, especially considering it involves spending wealth that is dear to one. He therefore mentioned them, in particular, to encourage their performance and to emphasise them so that they are not neglected.

In obligating hajj, Allah Most High has mentioned various forms of emphasis and deterrents: *The hajj to the House is a duty people owe to Allah* [Qur'an 3:97], meaning that it is an obligatory right on their necks and must be performed. He then said [in the same verse] *and whoever disbelieves*, rather than 'and whoever does not perform the hajj', to deter whomsoever fails to perform hajj. A similar deterrent has been mentioned in the hadith, namely his saying ﷺ 'Whoever possesses [sufficient] provisions and transport to deliver him to the Sacred House of Allah, but he does not perform hajj, then it does not matter whether he dies a Jew or a Christian.' (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi.) He Most High then said: *Allah stands not in need of anything from the worlds* [Qur'an 3:97],

rather than 'not in need of it' (*ghina 'anhu*), to demonstrate His utter self-sufficiency. If He is independent of the worlds, He is inevitably in no need of whatever is therein. This [verse] illustrates His absolute independence and is thus more suggestive of His extreme displeasure with the failure to perform the hajj.

As for stressing jihad [in the sacred texts], then its [instances are] countless. Since its difficulty for people is obvious, it requires such emphasis. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Jihad will continue until the Day of Resurrection, until the last of my nation will fight the Antichrist.'¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, He only mentioned them [hajj and jihad] together because of what 'Āishah related when she said, 'I asked, "O Messenger of Allah! We consider jihad to be the most virtuous deed, so should we not likewise engage in jihad?" He replied, "The best type of jihad is an accepted hajj."' (Narrated by al-Bukhārī.)

مَعَ أُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، بَرِّهِمْ وَفَاجِرِهِمْ، إِلَى قِيَامِ السَّاعَةِ، لَا يُبْطِلُهُمَا شَيْءٌ وَلَا يَنْقُضُهُمَا.

[Hajj and jihad are perpetual] until the Final Hour, under Muslim rulers, whether they are righteous or sinners. Nothing will nullify or abolish them.

He only said '[under Muslim] rulers' because hajj and jihad are associated with travelling and amassing of troops and convoys, and someone must regulate the affairs of people when turmoil arises, resist the enemy and eradicate brigandry. The absence of a leader among them would lead to anarchy in most matters, hence the reason why they need someone to whom they have recourse in their affairs and obey. [A leader] who enforces the rule of law among them, namely a Sultan or his deputies among the governors, whether he is righteous or a sinner, because infallibility from sins is not a prerequisite in a leader. As long as there is in him widespread benefit, and he regulates affairs in the public interest, he is eligible for the role of leader, even if he is a profligate, as his profligacy is only harmful to himself.

¹⁴⁵ Abū Dāwūd narrated it with a similar wording in the Book of Jihad, in the chapter on fighting under [the authority of] oppressive leaders.

THE GUARDIAN ANGELS WHO ARE SCRIBES



وَمُؤْمِنٌ بِالْكِرَامِ الْكَاتِبِينَ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ جَعَلَهُمْ عَلَيْنَا حَافِظِينَ.

We believe in the Honourable Scribes, for Allah has assigned them as guardians over us.

Allah Most High said: *But verily over you are guardians, honourable, writing down [your actions], who know [all that you do] [Qur'an 82:10–12]; Not a word does he utter, but there is an observer by him, ready [to note it down] [Qur'an 50:18].* The wisdom of this, despite the fact that Allah Most High knows what His slaves do, is to encourage them to do good works and deter them from sin, as all of the actions recorded by the guardian angels, whether good or evil, will be read out to him by them on the Day of Resurrection. Allah Most High said: *On the day when every soul will be confronted with all that it has done of good, and all that it has done of evil, [every soul] will long that there might be a great distance between it and that [evil] [Qur'an 3:30].* When a slave knows that someone is observing and witnessing him, recording his actions, he will be even more eager to do good works and more wary of sin.

وَنُؤْمِنُ بِمَلَكِ الْمَوْتِ الْمُوَكَّلِ بِقَبْضِ أَرْوَاحِ الْعَالَمِينَ.

We believe in the Angel of Death who is assigned with seizing the souls of all creatures.

Allah Most High said: Say, *'The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will [duly] take your souls'* [Qur'an 32:11].

THE GRAVE AND ITS STATES



وَنُؤْمِنُ بِمَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَنُعِجُّ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ أَهْلًا، وَيُسْأَلُ مُنْكَرٌ وَنَكِيرٌ لِلْمَيِّتِ فِي قَبْرِهِ عَنْ رَبِّهِ وَدِينِهِ وَنَبِيِّهِ، عَلَى مَا جَاءَتْ بِهِ الْأَخْبَارُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَعَنِ الصَّحَابَةِ رِضْوَانُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ. وَالْقَبْرُ رَوْضَةٌ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ أَوْ حُفْرَةٌ مِنْ حُفَرِ النَّارِ.

We believe in the torment in the grave and the bliss therein for whoever is worthy of them. Moreover, [we believe] in Munkar and Nakir's questioning the deceased in his grave about his Lord, religion and prophet, in accordance with the traditions that have come from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his companions (may Allah Most High be well pleased with them all). The grave is either one of the meadows of Paradise or one of the abysses of Hellfire.

It is obligatory to accept and believe in whatever the Book [Qur'an] has related and which the mind cannot deny.¹⁴⁶ We believe in the torment in the grave for those deserving of that, like the profligates, and the bliss therein for those worthy of it, like the righteous. Moreover, we believe in

¹⁴⁶ Imam al-Haddād ؒ said, 'The heart's due portion of the Unseen matters of belief, such as the interrogation of the Two Angels, is to believe and submit. It is not possible to be privy to them except through prophethood, and neither should one ask about their modality and description, for no one has conveyed to us that any of the Companions asked the Prophet ﷺ [about such matters].' Ibn Sumayr, al-Ḥabīb Zayn, *Bahjah al-tālibin*. 1st edn. Hadramawt: Dār al-'Ilm wa al-Da'wah, 1430/2009, 57.

Munkar and Nakir's questioning because of the traditions transmitted by the righteous mentioning it. For example, when 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ؓ would stand over a grave, he would weep until his beard would become wet. [One day] he was asked, 'You remember Paradise and Hellfire yet do not weep, but when you remember the grave, you weep?' He replied, 'I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, "The grave is the first stage of the Afterlife. If anyone is saved from it, then what follows it will be easier than it, but if someone is not saved from it, then what follows it will be severer than it."' (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi.)

Ibn 'Umar related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When anyone of you dies, his seat is shown to him morning and evening. If he is going to be among the inhabitants of Paradise, then [the seat that is shown to him is that] of the inhabitants of Paradise; and if he is going to be among the inhabitants of Hell, then [the seat that is shown to him is that] of the inhabitants of Hell. It is said to him, "This is your seat until Allah raises you on the Day of Resurrection." (Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.) This [tenet] is attested to by His Most High's saying: *The Fire; they will be brought before it [every] morning and evening* [Qur'an 40:46].

Zayd ibn Thābit relates, 'As we were with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in one of the orchards of Banī Najjār, his mule suddenly swerved [from the path] and was about to throw him off. Lo and behold, there [before him] were graves of six or five [people]. He ﷺ asked, "Who knows the occupants of these graves?" A man replied, "I." He ﷺ asked, "When did they pass away?" He replied, "In [a state of] polytheism." He replied, "This nation will be tried in its graves. Were it not for the fact that you might not bury one another, I would have supplicated Allah to make you hear the torment in the grave that I can hear." He then said, "We take refuge in Allah from the torment in the grave." (Narrated by Muslim.)

As for Munkar and Nakir's questioning, Anas has related from the Prophet ﷺ [that he said], 'When a slave is laid in his grave, and his friends leave him, he hears the footfalls of their sandals. Two angels then come to him and seat him upright and question him, "What did you use to say about this man?" namely, Muhammad ﷺ. As for a believer, he replies, "I testify that he is Allah's servant and messenger." He is then told, "Look at [what would have been] your seat in Hell. Yet Allah

has replaced it for you with a seat in Paradise.” He will then see them both, and a door will be opened for him from his grave to it. As for a disbeliever or a hypocrite, then he will reply, “I do not know. I used to repeat what people would say about him.” He will then be told, “May you never know!” He will, after that, be beaten with an iron hammer whereby he will scream [so loud] that those beside him will be able to hear (except for humans and jinn).’ (Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.) The soundest position is that the prophets are not interrogated in their graves.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ “The states of those interrogated in the graves vary: some of them are questioned by both angels and some by one of them. Imam al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) stated, “The hadiths differ over the manner of the interrogation and answering, as it is dependant on the people [interrogated]: some of them are interrogated on certain beliefs while others are questioned on all.” There is a difference of opinion over whether the interrogation is exclusive to this nation. The following are exempt from the questioning: the prophets, angels, the veracious (*siddiqīn*), Muslim soldiers guarding the Muslim frontiers (*murābiṭūn*), martyrs, whoever regularly recites *Tabārak* (*Sūrah al-Mulk*) every night, whoever recited *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ* thrice during the illness from which he died, whoever dies from an intestinal ailment, whoever dies during a plague, even if he does not die from it, the insane and the simple-minded (*ablah*). Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī was convinced that children are not interrogated. Jinn are questioned because they are morally responsible and because the generality of the proofs for the interrogation necessitate it.

“This interrogation is the tribulation (*fitnah*) in the grave and is similar to the bliss in the grave or its torment. What is meant [by the punishment in the grave] is the punishment in the intermediate world (*barzakh*) and its bliss, even if one is not buried in a cemetery. The recipient of bliss or torment is both the soul and the body, as there is nothing preventing Allah Most High from creating in either all or some parts a type of life, the amount whereby it feels the pain of the torment or the delight of the bliss. This does not necessarily mean that he moves or is shaken, or that the impact of the punishment can be seen upon him, such that even someone who has been devoured by a predatory animal or crucified in the air can be punished, even if we are oblivious to it. However, it has also been said that punishment or bliss is exclusive to the soul.

“Bliss is for the believers, while the punishment is for the disbelievers and the disobedient believers from this nation and others. The punishment in the grave is of two types: perpetual [until the rising], which is for the disbelievers and some of the disobedient believers; and temporary, which is for some of the disobedient believers whose crimes were light and it is interrupted through charity, supplication of the living for them, or without a reason (rather, through mere pardon from Allah).’ al-Dardir, Aḥmad. *Ḥāshiyah ‘alā Sharḥ al-Kharīdah*, 69.

RESURRECTION



وَتُؤْمِنُ بِالْبَعْثِ، وَجَزَاءِ الْأَعْمَالِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَالْعَرْضِ، وَالْحِسَابِ، وَقِرَاءَةِ الْكِتَابِ، وَالنَّوَابِ
وَالْعِقَابِ، وَالصِّرَاطِ، وَالْمِيزَانِ.

We believe in the resurrection [of the dead], the recompense for [their] actions on the Day of Resurrection, being presented [before Allah], the reckoning, the reading of the scrolls [of deeds], the reward and punishment, the Bridge and the Scale.

What is meant by 'resurrection' is the assembling of the bodies and bringing them back to life on the Day of Resurrection for them to be recompensed for the good and bad that they did in this world. It is true because it is [rationally] possible in and of itself, and the Truthful One [the Prophet ﷺ] has related of its occurrence; hence it is necessary to believe in it. As for its being possible, then since their origination was possible, their assembling—which is an expression for the return—is all the more possible; and [because] Allah Most High has power over all possible things and knows all universals and particulars, He is therefore able to assemble their parts after their separation and create life within them. This [argument] is alluded to by His Most High's saying: *It is He who produces creation, then reproduces it, and for Him, it is most easy* [Qur'an 30:27], and His words: *Say: 'He will revive them who produced them at first...'. Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able*

to create the like thereof? Yes, indeed; He is the Creator Supreme, All-Knowing [Qur'an 36:79–81].

As for His informing of its occurrence, then it is established by His Most High's words: *The Trumpet will be blown and lo from their graves they hie down to their Lord* [Qur'an 36:51]; *And the Trumpet is blown, and all who are in the heavens and on earth swoon away, save him whom Allah wills. Then it is blown a second time, and behold, they are standing and looking on!* [Qur'an 39:68]. Since the verses and reports regarding it are countless, and it is among those matters necessarily known to be part of the religion, it is necessary to believe in it.

As for the recompense, it is established by His Most High's words: *You are being but recompensed for all that you did* [Qur'an 66:7]; *as a reward for your [righteous] actions* [Qur'an 32:17]. Again, the verses regarding it are numerous. As for being presented before Allah, it is established by His Most High's saying: *And they will be brought before your Lord in ranks. Now, indeed, you have come to Us as We created you at the first* [Qur'an 18:48], and His words: *On that day, you will be brought to judgement: no act of yours that you hide will be hidden* [Qur'an 69:18]. As for the reckoning, it is established by His Most High's saying: *and if there be [no more than] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it: and We suffice for reckoners* [Qur'an 21:47].¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ The Reckoning is Allah's stationing His slaves on the plane of the Day of Resurrection for their works—namely actions, words and beliefs—to be judged in detail. Allah will speak to them with an eternal speech that is not composed of sounds and letters, such that He removes from them the veils, so that they may hear Him, or with a voice that Allah Most High creates that is indicative of His speech. The occasion of Reckoning may be from the angels only, or it may be from both Him Most High and the angels. Also, its manner varies: easy or difficult, and concealed or public. Grace and justice will be administered commensurate with people's deeds. He will forgive whomever He wills and punish whomever He wills. It will be for both believers and disbelievers, be they human or jinn, after they take their scrolls of deeds, because of His Most High's words: *As for he who is given his book in his right hand, then he will receive an easy reckoning and will return to his folk in joy* (Qur'an 84:7–9). The most lenient form of being taken to account by Allah will be when no other human being, jinn or angel knows of one's being interrogated, where He Most High says: "These are your bad deeds that I have forgiven you for, and these are your good deeds that I have multiplied for you." However, there is no reckoning for those who are protected from sins [i.e. the prophets ﷺ] and the 70,000 who will enter Paradise immediately, the best of whom is Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه. In spite of this nation being the last nation, it will nevertheless precede other nations in the Hereafter for accountability and other matters. al-Dardir, Ahmad. *Hāshiyah 'alā sharh al-kharidāh*, 62–63.

As for the reading of the scrolls [of deeds], it is established by His Most High's saying: *On the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will find wide open. [And it will be said to him]: 'Read your record! Sufficient is your soul this day to make out an account against you' [Qur'an 17:13–14].* A believer's record will be given in his right hand, whereas a disbeliever's record will be given to him in his left hand or behind his back. Allah Most High said: *Then he who is given his record in his right hand, He truly will receive an easy reckoning; and he will return to his people, rejoicing. But he who is given his record behind his back, He surely will invoke perdition [Qur'an 84:7–11].*

As for the Bridge, it is a structure stretched across the centre of Hellfire, sharper than a sword, finer than a hair. Mankind will cross over it: some of them like a flash of lightning; some like a gust of wind; some like a steed; some like a person walking; and some like a crawling ant. People will cross over it according to their degrees and actions in this world. His Most High's saying establishes its reality: *Then We shall rescue those who kept from evil, and leave the wrongdoers crouching there [Qur'an 19:72];* and by what 'Ā'ishah related: 'I then remembered Hellfire and thus cried. He [the Prophet] ﷺ asked, "Why are you crying?" I replied, "I remembered Hellfire and thus cried. Will you remember your wives on the Day of Resurrection?" He said, "As for three places, then no one will remember another: at the Scales until he knows whether his scale is light or heavy; when the scrolls [of deeds] are dispersed until he knows where his scroll will land—in his right hand, his left hand, or behind his back; and at the Bridge when it is erected over Hellfire until he crosses it." (Narrated by Abū Dāwūd.)

As for the Scale, it is an expression denoting that with which actions are measured. Their actions, good or bad, will be weighed. However, we refrain from assigning to it a modality.¹⁴⁹ The proof of it is His Most

¹⁴⁹ The Scale with which the deeds of humanity shall be weighed will be before the Bridge. Since the Qur'an and Sunna, in numerous hadiths that amount to mass transmission, establish it, it is necessary to believe in it, even if we do not know its reality. It is a single scale for all nations and all their deeds, both believers and disbelievers. The only exceptions to this stage being prophets, angels, and those who enter Paradise without accountability, as it is a type of accountability, and those mentioned above are unaccountable. Furthermore, it is in the form of a scale in this world, i.e. it has two scalepans (each scalepan is the size of the horizons of the world)

High's saying: *The weighing on that day is the real [weighing]. As for those whose scale is heavy, they are the successful* [Qur'an 7:8]; *We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection* [Qur'an 21:47]; *Then, as for him whose scales are heavy [with good works]* [Qur'an 101:6].

and a balance indicator. Righteous deeds appear in a beautiful, radiant form and are placed in the bright hand, which is prepared for good deeds on the right side of the Throne facing Paradise. By contrast, evil deeds appear in a dark, ugly form and are placed in the dark hand, which is prepared for evil deeds, on the left side of the Throne facing Hell. It has been said that the scrolls wherein people's deeds are written are weighed, based on the fact that good deeds are distinguished from evil deeds with an independent book, and this has been substantiated by the Hadith of the Card (*baṭāqah*). al-Dardir, Ahmad. *Hāshiyah 'alā Sharḥ al-Kharidah*, 64.

PARADISE AND HELLFIRE



وَالْجَنَّةُ وَالنَّارُ مَخْلُوقَتَانِ لَا تَفْنَيَانِ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَبِيدَانِ.

Paradise and Hellfire have already been created, and will never perish nor cease to exist.¹⁵⁰

Likewise is the case with their inhabitants, as attested to by His Most High's saying: *to abide therein forever* [Qur'an 4:57]. He has explicitly stated both parties abiding [therein] forever, and perpetuity is incongruent with impermanence and cessation. Furthermore, it has been related in the hadith, 'The inhabitants of Paradise will neither die nor grow old; and their clothes will not become worn out nor will their youth fade.'¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Imam Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī [d. 756/1355] said:

The faith of Muslims is that paradise and Hell do not perish, Abu Muhammad Ibn Hazm having transmitted scholarly consensus (ijma') on this point and on the fact that whoever denies it is an unbeliever (kāfir) by scholarly consensus. And there is no doubt of this, for it is necessarily known as part of the religion of Islam, and proof after proof bears it out. Allah Most High says: Verily those who disbelieve, and die as unbelievers; the curse of Allah, the angels, and people, one and all, is upon them, abiding therein forever; the torment will not be lightened from them, nor will they be respited [Koran 2:161–62].

al-Misri, Ahmad ibn Naqīb. *Reliance of the Traveller*, trans. N. Keller. Revised edn. Evanston, IL, USA: Sunna Books. 1994, 995.

¹⁵¹ Al-Tirmidhī narrated it with a similar wording in the chapter: What has been related about the description of Paradise and its bliss.

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى خَلَقَ الْجَنَّةَ وَالنَّارَ قَبْلَ الْخَلْقِ.

Allah Most High created Paradise and Hellfire before the [rest of] creation.

Allah Most High said: *For, indeed, he saw him at a second descent, by the lote-tree of the utmost boundary, near to the Garden of Abode [Qur'an 53:13–15]; O Ādam! Dwell you and your wife in the Garden [Qur'an 2:35].* This statement is a rejection of the position of the Mu'tazilah that they have not yet been created, but rather will only be created after the resurrection.

وَخَلَقَ لَهُمَا أَهْلًا، فَمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ فَضَلًا مِنْهُ، وَمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْهُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ عَذَابًا مِنْهُ.

He then created for them occupants. Some He willed to admit to Paradise out of His grace; and some He willed to admit to Hellfire out of His justice.

[This is known] because of what 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها related: 'A child of the Anṣār passed away, whereupon I remarked, "Glad tidings to him: [he is] one of the sparrows of Paradise!" He ﷺ said, "Do you not know that Allah created Paradise and Hellfire, and then created for this inhabitants, and for this inhabitant and said, "These are for Paradise, and I do not care; and these are for Hellfire, and I do not not care?"¹⁵²

Admittance to Paradise is out of Allah's grace, not through one's actions. Allah Most High said: *Race one with another for forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose breadth is as the breadth of the heavens and the earth, which is in store for those who believe in Allah and His messengers. Such is the bounty of Allah, which He bestows upon whom He wills [Qur'an 57:21].* The Prophet ﷺ said, 'No one shall enter Paradise except by Allah's mercy!' Someone asked, 'Not even you, O Messenger?' He replied, 'Not even I unless Allah receives me with His mercy.'¹⁵³ This statement is a rejection of the position of the Mu'tazilah that it is obligatory for Allah [to reward good actions]. Admittance to Hellfire is

¹⁵² Narrated by Muslim in the Book of Destiny.

¹⁵³ Narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of that which Softens the Hearts and Muslim in the Book of the Description of the Hypocrites.

out of His justice, because He made it incumbent on them to believe out of their own choice and informed them of the torment for not believing and [complying with His] commandments and for committing prohibitions. Whoever gives a warning has vindicated himself; hence [His] punishment is out of His justice and wisdom.

وَكُلٌّ يَفْعَلُ لِمَا قَدْ فُرِغَ لَهُ وَصَائِرٌ إِلَىٰ مَا خُلِقَ لَهُ. وَالْخَيْرُ وَالشَّرُّ مَقْدَرَانِ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ.

Every person acts in accordance with what has been preordained for him and proceeds inevitably towards that for which he has been created. Good and evil have been preordained for slaves.

He Most High said: *Say, 'Everyone acts according to his own disposition'* [Qur'an 17:84]. And the Prophet ﷺ said, 'The Pen has dried [writing] about what is going to happen until the Day of Resurrection,'¹⁵⁴ and, 'Everyone is facilitated with that for which he was created.'¹⁵⁵ We have already mentioned that good and evil are by Allah's will, volition, decree and foreordination; hence they are preordained for slaves. Allah Most High said: *But you will not, except as Allah wills* [Qur'an 76:30]. The Prophet ﷺ alluded to this when he said 'and destiny, its good and evil, is from Allah.' The hadith of Jibril [from which this latter statement is drawn] is well known, and it has previously been cited, so there is no need to repeat it here.

¹⁵⁴ Part of a hadith narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* and Aḥmad.

¹⁵⁵ Part of a hadith narrated by Muslim in the Book of Destiny and al-Bukhārī in the Book of Exegesis.

THE ABILITY THAT ACCOMPANIES ACTS



وَالْإِسْطَاعَةُ الَّتِي يَجِبُ بِهَا الْفِعْلُ مِنْ نَحْوِ التَّوْفِيقِ الَّذِي لَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُوصَفَ الْمَخْلُوقُ بِهِ، فَهِيَ
مَعَ الْفِعْلِ، وَأَمَّا الْإِسْطَاعَةُ مِنْ جِهَةِ الصَّحَّةِ، وَالْوُسْعِ، وَالْتِمَكُّنِ، وَسَلَامَةِ الْأَلَاتِ، فَهِيَ قَبْلَ الْفِعْلِ،
وَبِهَا يَتَعَلَّقُ الْخِطَابُ، وَهِيَ كَمَا قَالَ تَعَالَى: ﴿لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا﴾.

The ability that must exist for the performance of an act—like the enablement (*tawfiq*) [to obey Allah], for instance, which cannot be attributed to a creature—accompanies the action. As for the ability arising from good health, capacity, readiness and healthy limbs, then it precedes the action. It is this latter type that legal responsibility is contingent upon, as Allah Most High said: *Allah never burdens a soul beyond its capacity* [Qur'an 2:286].

Know that ability is of two types: hidden and apparent. The hidden is that by which an action happens, with Allah Most High producing it concurrently with the action. In respect of acts of obedience, it is called 'enablement' (*tawfiq*); and with regard to acts of disobedience, it is called 'abandonment' (*khidhlān*). Creation is not attributed with this because it is from Allah. This type of ability accompanies the act, akin to the movement of a finger with the movement of the ring, such that a slave is continuously in need of Allah's enablement, volition and support.

[Allah Most High said:] *But you will not, except as Allah wills; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom* [Qur'an 76:30]. Moreover, a slave has no independence whatsoever in producing his actions but rather needs Allah at every moment, which is the reality of servitude and neediness. Allah Most High said: *It is you that have need of Allah* [Qur'an 35:15]. The aforementioned statement is a rejection of the position of the Mu'tazilah that this ability precedes an action and that it is within the power of a slave.

As for the apparent type of ability, it is the ability arising from capacity, readiness and possessing sound implements, limbs, and healthy organs. This type precedes an act and is pivotal to moral responsibility (*taklīf*). Since the first [type of ability] is hidden, and a person is unaware of it, being obligated with moral responsibilities hinges upon it [the apparent type]. Whoever can perform acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting and hajj, is only obliged to perform them based on his apparent ability, even if nothing of this transpires, given that Allah creates the ability to act.

In His Most High's words: *Allah never obligates a soul beyond its capacity* [Qur'an 2:286] there is evidence that moral responsibility is only for that which is within one's capacity, based on his apparent ability. Moreover, it [the above verse] is a rejection of the position of the Ash'aris, as they allowed the possibility of one being obligated with that which is beyond one's strength.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Commenting on Imam al-Ṭahāwī's statement 'He only obligated them with what they have the strength to do', Imam al-Ghunaymī says:

He did not obligate them with what is beyond their capacity, whether it is something inherently impossible, such as uniting opposites, or intrinsically possible [but customarily impossible], such as creating a body. As for what is impossible due to Allah Most High's knowing its contrary, or His having willed its opposite, such as the faith of a disbeliever and the obedience of a sinner, then there is no dispute over the occurrence of the moral responsibility for it, because it, in and of itself, is within the ability of a morally responsible person. The lack of moral responsibility for what is beyond one's capacity is agreed upon because of His Most High's saying: *Allah never obligates a soul beyond its capacity* [Qur'an 2:286].

Further on in the discussion, he cites *al-Musāmamah Sharḥ al-Musāyarah*:

They [the Māturidis] disagree with the Ash'aris on their belief that it [Allah obligating His slaves with what is beyond their capacity] is rationally possible. What is meant is that they

SLAVES' ACTIONS



وَأَعْمَالُ الْعِبَادِ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ وَكَسَبَ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ.

Actions of slaves are created by Allah Most High but acquired by slaves.

This statement is a rejection of the positions of the Mu'tazilah and the Jabriyyah ('Compulsionists'). The Mu'tazilah opine that slaves create their actions, not Allah. By contrast, the Jabriyyah opine that Allah creates their actions and that they have no acquisition or free will in respect of them. These schools are at the opposite ends of extremism and negligence. The right path and the upright way is the position of the Ahl al-Sunnah, which is that Allah creates actions, yet slaves acquire them.

As for the evidence that Allah creates actions, it is His Most High's saying: *When Allah has created you and what you make* [Qur'an 37:96]. Furthermore, it is because He creates all possible things, and a slave's

[the Māturidis] consider moral responsibility for what is intrinsically impossible [such as uniting opposites] to be impossible. As for what is impossible due to Allah Most High's knowledge of its non occurrence, such as the faith (*īmān*) of those whom He Most High knew will not believe [such as Abū Lahab], then Allah's making them morally responsible is rationally possible and its having occurred is agreed upon [between the Ash'aris and the Māturidis alike].

al-Ghunaymī. *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Tahāwīyyah*, 129.

action is of those possible matters. As for the evidence that slaves acquire their actions, it is His Most High's words: *That is because of [the works] which your hands sent forth [Qur'an 22:10]; it is what your right hands have earned [Qur'an 42:30]; And whoever earns a sin, he only earns it against His soul [Qur'an 4:111]; And whoever earns a fault or a sin [Qur'an 4:112]; But He will take you to task for what your hearts have earned [Qur'an 2:225].* The positions of both [deviant] factions neglect one of the two proofs, whereas our position combines them and is therefore superior.

وَلَمْ يُكَلِّفَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى إِلَّا مَا يُطِيقُونَ، وَلَا يُطِيقُونَ إِلَّا مَا كَلَّفَهُمْ، وَهُوَ تَفْسِيرُ ﴿لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ﴾. نَقُولُ: لَا حِيلَةَ لِأَحَدٍ، وَلَا حَرَكَةَ لِأَحَدٍ، وَلَا تَحَوُّلَ لِأَحَدٍ عَنِ مَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بِمَعُونَةِ اللَّهِ، وَلَا قُوَّةَ لِأَحَدٍ عَلَى إِقَامَةِ طَاعَةِ اللَّهِ وَالنَّبَاتِ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا بِتَوْفِيقِ اللَّهِ، وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ يَجْرِي بِمَشِيئَةِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى، وَعِلْمِهِ، وَقَضَائِهِ، وَقَدَرِهِ. خَلَبَتْ مَشِيئَتُهُ الْمَشِيئَاتِ كُلَّهَا، وَغَلَبَ قَضَاؤُهُ الْحِيلَ كُلَّهَا. يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ غَيْرُ ظَالِمٍ أَبَدًا.

Allah Most High only obligated them to do that which they have the strength to do, and they only have the strength to do that which He obligated them [to do]. That is the explanation of 'There is no strategy nor might save with Allah'. We assert that no one can devise a strategy, move or desist from disobedience except with Allah's aid. And no one has the power to obey Allah and remain steadfast therein except with Allah's assistance. Everything comes to be by Allah Most High's will, knowledge, decree and foreordination. His volition has prevailed over all volitions, and His decree has prevailed over all strategies. He does what He wills, and He is never unjust.¹⁵⁷

The evidence for that has already been presented.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Ghunaymī, in his commentary to *Aqidah al-Tahāwiyyah*, reiterates the point made above that Allah can never be unjust because everything is His possession. As its possessor, He can exercise His right over His possession as He sees fit. He then quotes Imam al-Ghazālī making a similar point. al-Ghunaymī. *Sharḥ al-'Aqidah al-Tahāwiyyah*, 130.

SUPPLICATION AND ALMS ON BEHALF OF THE DECEASED



وَفِي دُعَاءِ الْأَحْيَاءِ وَصَدَقَاتِهِمْ مَنَّعةٌ لِّلْأَمْوَاتِ.

In the supplications and alms of the living, there is a benefit for the deceased.

As for supplications, their efficacy for the deceased is established by His Most High's saying: *And those who came after them say: 'Our Lord, forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the faith [Qur'an 59:10].* He praised them for that. If there were no benefit in praying and seeking forgiveness for the deceased, they would not have merited praise. Moreover, [it is established] because the prayer over the deceased is obligatory, and it merely consists of extolment and the supplication 'O Allah! Forgive our living and deceased'. If supplications were futile, then the prayer over the deceased would not have been made obligatory, due to the lack of benefit thereof. As for [the benefit in] giving alms, it is because of his saying ﷺ 'Spend alms on behalf of your deceased'.¹⁵⁸ If charity [on behalf of the deceased] were devoid of benefit, he would not have enjoined it.

¹⁵⁸ This wording is not found in the available hadith collections.

وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى يَسْتَجِيبُ الدَّعَوَاتِ،

Allah Most High answers supplications,

for He Most High has enjoined on us to supplicate and has promised to answer. Allah Most High said: *Call on Me; I will answer you* [Qur'an 40:60]; *I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he prays to Me* [Qur'an 2:186].

وَيَقْضِي الْحَاجَاتِ،

And He fulfils needs,

because He is characterised by absolute mercy and has power over everything, and [because] He endures no hardship in fulfilling them, and there is benefit in it for those in need. Hence He fulfils them, [for] He is the fulfiller of needs and the answerer of supplications. He only said the above to counter the claim of some of the Mu'tazilah that prayers are ineffectual.

وَيَمْلِكُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ،

He possesses everything.

Allah Most High said: *His is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth* [Qur'an 57:2].

وَلَا يَمْلِكُهُ شَيْءٌ.

And nothing possesses Him,

because the owner does not become owned.

وَلَا غِنَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَىٰ طَرَفَةٌ عَيْنٍ.

No one is independent of Allah Most High for the blink of an eye

because everything besides Him is possible, and whatever is possible in its existence and continuance needs the Necessarily Existent and thus cannot be self-sufficient. Impoverishment and need of Him are therefore necessary for everything. Allah Most High said: *O mankind! It is you who need Allah* [Qur'an 35:15]. Since [all] things only subsist by His

sustaining them, He is the sustainer of everything. Were it not for His providence for things, they would have all imploded into nothingness and dwindled.

وَمَنْ اسْتَغْنَىٰ عَنِ اللَّهِ طَرَفَةً عَيْنٍ فَقَدْ كَفَرَ.

Whosoever claims to be independent of Allah for the blink of an eye is a disbeliever,

as impoverishment is a necessary attribute of a slave. By contrast, self-sufficiency is the attribute of the Lord. If a slave believes himself to be independent of his Lord, he thereby becomes ignorant of his Lord and himself, associating with Him the attribute of self-sufficiency and thus becoming a disbeliever.

وَصَارَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْحَيْنِ.

And such a person becomes one whose end is destruction.

This is so because a disbeliever will be perpetually subjected to severe torment. What destruction can be worse than that?

ALLAH'S WRATH AND PLEASURE



وَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى يَغْضَبُ وَيَرْضَى لَا كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ الْوَرَى.

Allah Most High is wrathful and pleased, but not like any human.

This is [known] because Allah has described Himself as having wrath and pleasure: *The wrath of Allah is on them* [Qur'an 48:6]; *Allah is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Allah* [Qur'an 5:119]. Hence it is established that He is attributed with pleasure and wrath. However, what is meant by His wrath and pleasure is not the same as the wrath and pleasure [understood] of creation. That is because wrath in creation is an expression of a state wherein a person's face changes and reddens and his jugular veins bulge, and pleasure [in creation] is an expression of jubilation and inner happiness. By contrast, Allah Most High is exalted above change and alternation in states. We say: what is intended by Allah's wrath is His will to exact retribution against sinners who disobey [Him] and inflict punishment, and to deal with them as a king would deal with those under his authority with whom he is angry. We take refuge in Allah from His wrath! What is intended by Allah's pleasure is His will to reward those who obey Him and to pardon those who disobey Him, and to deal with them as a king would deal with those under his authority whom he is pleased with, by honouring them and bestowing on them further blessings. We ask Allah for His pleasure and mercy!

LOVING THE COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET ﷺ



وَنُحِبُّ أَصْحَابَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَلَا نَفْرَطُ فِي حُبِّ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ، وَلَا نَتَبَرَّأُ مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ، وَنُبْغِضُ
مَنْ يَبْغِضُهُمْ وَيَتَمَيَّرُ الْحَقَّ يَذْكُرُهُمْ، وَلَا نَذْكُرُهُمْ إِلَّا بِخَيْرٍ، وَحُبُّهُمْ دِينٌ وَإِيمَانٌ وَإِحْسَانٌ، وَبُغْضُهُمْ
كُفْرٌ وَنِفَاقٌ وَطُغْيَانٌ.

We love the Messenger of Allah's Companions ﷺ. We do not, however, go to extremes in loving any one of them [in particular], nor do we dissociate ourselves from anyone of them. We detest whomsoever detests them and does not speak truthfully¹⁵⁹ about them. We speak only good of them. Loving them is obedience, faith and excellence, whereas detesting them is disbelief, hypocrisy and transgression.

The reason for loving them is because Allah Most High was pleased with them and they were pleased with Him; and He extolled them in the Tawrah, the Injil and the Criterion [the Qur'an] when He said: *Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are hard against the disbelievers... Such is their likeness in the Tawrah and their likeness in the Injil* [Qur'an 48:29]. They expended much effort in propagating the religion and elevating the word of truth [the testimony of faith]. In

¹⁵⁹ Another manuscript copy reads الحَيِّز ('well').

their love for the Messenger ﷺ, they migrated from their homelands. They gave him sanctuary, supported him, and fought before him. It is therefore an obligation to love them. The Prophet ﷺ said:

[Beware of] Allah, [beware of] Allah concerning my companions. Do not take them as a target [for your vilification] after me. For whoever loves them, then it is out of his love for me that he loves them, and whoever hates them, then it is out of his hatred for me that he hates them. Whoever harms them, it is as if he has harmed me, and whoever harms me, it is as if he has harmed Allah, and whoever [tries to] harm Allah, then Hellfire is befitting for him.¹⁶⁰

However, the reason for not going to extremes in loving any one of them [in particular] is because going to extremes in anything leads to degeneracy and detestation of others. Look at how the Rāfiḍah went to extremes in their love for ‘Alī ؑ and how it led to them detesting Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān ؑ—we take refuge in Allah from that—and claiming that ‘Alī was God or a prophet, as is the doctrine of the extremists among the Rāfiḍah. The Prophet ﷺ said to ‘Alī ؑ, ‘Two kinds of people will perish because of you: a negligent hater and an excessive lover.’¹⁶¹ Indeed, it came to pass as he ؑ foretold, for the Khawārij perished because of their negligent hatred of him, just as the Rāfiḍah perished because of their excessive love for him.

As for dissociating oneself from them [the Companions], it is deviance and misguidance, because they were on the straight path and the right religion, and [because] guidance is contingent upon following them. He [the Prophet] ﷺ said, ‘My companions are like the stars: whomsoever of them you follow, you will be guided.’¹⁶² In dissociating

¹⁶⁰ Narrated by Ahmad and al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Qualities and Characteristics.

¹⁶¹ Narrated by Ibn Abī Shaybah in his *Muṣannaf*, Abū Bakr al-Khallāl in *al-Sunnah* and Ibn al-Ja’d in his *Musnad*.

¹⁶² This ḥadīth is not authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) according to the scholars, but they have differed as to whether it is fabricated (*mawḍū‘*), very weak or merely weak (*ḍa‘īf*) concerning some of its chains of transmission. A weak ḥadīth is accepted by the scholars in *faḍā’il*, especially when there are supporting ḥadīths. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) said in his book *al-Itqād*, after mentioning the ḥadīth of Abū Mūsā, which he ascribed back to the Prophet ﷺ, that ‘The stars are [a source of] safety for the skies. When the stars disappear, then what the inhabitants of the skies have

oneself from them, there is the absence of guidance, which is misguidance. Regarding his statement 'We detest those who detest them', then that is because detestation of them only stems from antipathy towards their religion, which Allah chose [for them]. He said: *and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion* [Qur'an 5:3]. That is proof of their vile belief and a consequence of their hypocrisy and corrupt state. It is therefore obligatory to detest whosoever detests and vilifies them.

We do not delve into the disputes that arose between them. Rather, we explain their state as one brought about by the exercise of personal reasoning (*ijtihād*).¹⁶³ We speak only good of them because they are the pillars of this religion, so disparaging them is, in reality, disparaging the religion. Regarding his statement 'Loving them is [a hallmark of] obedience, faith and excellence, whereas detesting them is [a sign of] disbelief, hypocrisy and transgression', all of this is evidently among the necessary matters of the Sacred Law.

been threatened with will befall them. [Similarly] my Companions are safety for my nation. When my Companions disappear, then what my nation has been threatened with will transpire' Muslim narrated it with the same meaning. It has been narrated in an uninterrupted hadith (*maṣṣūl*) with a weak chain of transmission, and in another interrupted chain of transmission (*munqaṭīʿ*), that he ﷺ said, 'The similitude of my Companions is like the similitude of the stars in the skies: whoever adopts one of the stars will be guided.' He said, 'The rigorously authentic hadith which we have narrated here conveys its meaning partially.' Strāḡ al-Dīn ibn Mulaqqin, *al-Badr al-munir fī takhrij al-aḥādīth wa al-āthār alḥaqīqah fī al-sharḥ al-Kaṭīr* (n.p.), 9:587.

¹⁶³ The Prophet ﷺ said, 'If a ruler passes judgement after having exercised personal reasoning (*ijtihād*) and is correct, then he has two rewards. However, if he passes judgement after having exercised personal reasoning and errs, then he has a single reward.' (Narrated by Muslim and al-Bukhārī.)

THE ORDER OF THE CALIPHATE



وَتَثَبَّتْ الْخِلَافَةُ بَعْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَوَّلًا لِأَبِي بَكْرٍ الصِّدِّيقِ تَفْضِيلًا لَهُ وَتَقْدِيمًا عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْأُمَّةِ، ثُمَّ لِعُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ، ثُمَّ لِعُثْمَانَ، ثُمَّ لِعَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ ﷺ، وَهُمْ الْخُلَفَاءُ الرَّاشِدُونَ وَالْأَئِمَّةُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ.

We affirm that Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was the first to assume the caliphate after the [passing of the] Messenger of Allah ﷺ, because of his superiority and precedence over the entire nation, followed by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, and finally 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ﷺ. They are the upright caliphs and the rightly-guided leaders.

The rightful leader after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. The Shi'ites, however, opposed the majority of the Muslims and claimed that the rightful leader after the Messenger ﷺ was 'Alī ﷺ. The proof of the mainstream Muslims is that the Companions, both the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār, unanimously agreed on Abū Bakr's leadership ﷺ; and it [their consensus] is one of the strongest proofs for establishing leadership. The basis of that consensus is his saying ﷺ 'Convey to Abū Bakr my order for him to lead the people in prayer'.¹⁶⁴ Since in his lifetime, he appointed him his successor in [leading] the prayer (which is the most significant pillar of

¹⁶⁴ Part of a longer hadith narrated by al-Bukhārī in the Book of Azan and Muslim in the Book of Prayer.

the religion), he was then to continue after his passing as his successor in [leading] the prayer, and hence a *fortiori* in other matters. Consequently, 'Umar ؓ said, 'Since the Messenger of Allah was satisfied with you for our religious affairs, should we not be satisfied with you for our worldly affairs?' Furthermore, [his appointment before anyone else was] because he is the most virtuous person after the prophets, as attested to by his saying ؓ 'By Allah, the sun has never risen nor set over anyone after the prophets more virtuous than Abū Bakr'.¹⁶⁵

Considering that the caliphate of Abū Bakr ؓ was established by consensus, and that he left instruction for the caliphate to be handed over to 'Umar ؓ after him, and that the Companions concurred on their pledging allegiance to him, 'Umar's caliphate ؓ is rightfully established after him. The Prophet ﷺ alluded to this [in his saying] 'Follow those two after me: Abū Bakr and 'Umar ؓ'.¹⁶⁶ As for 'Umar ؓ, he did not appoint any successor at the time of his death but instead left the matter to consultation between six Companions, all of whom have been assured of Paradise: 'Uthmān, 'Alī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr and Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf then pledged allegiance to 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, with the rest of the consultative team and other Companions happily accepting him; hence his caliphate was established by the consensus of the Companions. 'Uthmān then died a martyr, and because he did not appoint anyone as his successor, the remainder of the consultative team, and others, concurred on the caliphate of 'Alī ؓ. Hence his caliphate became binding by their pledge of allegiance.

The caliphate came to an end after 'Alī ؓ, as attested by his saying ؓ 'The caliphate after me will be for thirty years. It will, after that, become a monarchy and despotism. It will then become unjust despoilment'.¹⁶⁷ The Prophet ﷺ knew through revelation—and it is a splendid miracle—that the caliphate would come to an end after thirty

¹⁶⁵ Part of a longer hadith narrated by Ahmad in the Book of the Merits of the Companions and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*.

¹⁶⁶ Narrated by al-Ḥākim, al-Tirmidhī in the Book of Qualities and Characteristics, and Ahmad.

¹⁶⁷ Narrated by al-Tirmidhī with a similar wording in the Book of Tribulations, and Abū Dāwūd in the Book of Sunna.

years, and thus transpired; Abū Bakr's caliphate ﷺ lasted two years, 'Umar's ﷺ ten years, 'Uthmān's ﷺ twelve years, and 'Alī's ﷺ six years: thirty years in total. They are the upright caliphs and the rightly-guided leaders who followed in the footsteps of the Messenger ﷺ and did not deviate from his way in anything. The Prophet ﷺ alluded to them in his saying 'Adhere to my *sunnah* and the *sunnah* of the rightly-guided caliphs after me. [You must] hold fast to them!'

THE TEN GIVEN THE GLAD TIDINGS OF PARADISE



وَإِنَّ الْعَشْرَةَ الَّذِينَ سَمَّاهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَبَشَّرَهُمْ بِالْجَنَّةِ، نَشْهَدُ لَهُمْ بِالْجَنَّةِ، عَلَى مَا شَهِدَ لَهُمْ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَقَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ، وَهُمْ أَبُو بَكْرٍ، وَعُمَرُ، وَعُثْمَانُ، وَعَلِيٌّ، وَطَلْحَةُ، وَالزُّبَيْرُ، وَسَعْدُ،
وَسَعِيدُ، وَعَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَوْفٍ، وَأَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ الْجَرَّاحِ وَهُوَ أَمِينُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
أَجْمَعِينَ.

We testify, in accordance with the testimony of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, that the Ten whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned by name and to whom he gave the glad tidings of Paradise are indeed in Paradise and that his word is true. These are Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr, Sa'd, Sa'īd, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf and Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ (who is the Trustee of this Nation). May Allah be well pleased with them all!¹⁶⁸

This is plain and clear.

¹⁶⁸ Many more Companions have been assured of Paradise, but the Prophet ﷺ distinguished these ten by mentioning them in a single hadith. Ibn Hibbān, Aḥmad, al-Nasā'ī and al-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan* have narrated the hadith: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Abū Bakr is in Paradise; 'Umar is in Paradise; 'Uthmān is in Paradise; 'Alī is in Paradise; Ṭalḥah is in Paradise; al-Zubayr is in Paradise; 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf is in Paradise; Sa'd [ibn Abī Waqqāṣ] is in Paradise; Sa'īd [ibn Zayd] is in Paradise; and Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ is in Paradise."

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنَ الْقَوْلَ فِي أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَزْوَاجِهِ¹⁶⁹ وَذُرِّيَّتِهِ¹⁷⁰ فَقَدْ بَرِيَ مِنَ النِّفَاقِ.

Whoever speaks well of the Messenger of Allah's companions ﷺ, wives and progeny, is absolved of hypocrisy.

This [obligation to speak well of them] is because He (Glorified and Most High) praised the Companions in many places [in the Qur'an], among them His Most High words: *And [as for] the foremost, the first, of the Muhājirin and the Anṣār [Qur'an 9:100]; on the day when Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him [Qur'an 66:8]; harsh against disbelievers, [but] compassionate among each other. You see them bow and prostrate themselves [in prayer], seeking grace from Allah and [His] good pleasure [Qur'an 48:29].* It is therefore obligatory to revere them. Whoever speaks well of them is absolved of hypocrisy.

Similarly, the wives of the Prophet ﷺ are the Mothers of the Believers, and they had the blessings of accompanying the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ. Likewise, [we view] his progeny, his pure folk from whom Allah removed [all] abomination and whom He thoroughly purified. Loving them is a hallmark of faith, disassociation from them is a sign of hypocrisy, and denigrating them can only stem from a corrupt inward state and bad faith.

¹⁶⁹ Another manuscript copy reads *الطاهرات من كل دنس* ('pure of every blemish') after *أزواجه* ('his wives').

¹⁷⁰ Another manuscript copy reads *المقدس من كل رجس* ('sanctified of every impurity') after *ذريته* ('his offspring').

SPEAKING WELL OF SCHOLARS



وَعُلَمَاءُ السَّلَفِ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَالتَّابِعِينَ وَمَنْ بَعَثَهُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْخَيْرِ وَالْأَكْبَرِ، وَأَهْلِ الْفِقْهِ وَالنُّظَرِ، لَا يُذَكَّرُونَ إِلَّا بِالْجَوِيلِ، وَمَنْ ذَكَرَهُمْ بِشَوْءٍ فَهُوَ عَلَى غَيْرِ السَّبِيلِ.

The righteous scholars among the early Muslims (*Salaf*)¹⁷¹ and their Successors, and the virtuous traditionists, jurists and jurisprudents who came after them, should be only spoken of in good terms. Whoever speaks ill of them has departed from the [right] path,

because honouring these people is part of honouring the religion, as they are the inheritors of the prophets and the transmitters of the Sacred Law. Therefore, it is an obligation to follow and praise them and withhold one's tongue from disparaging them. Whoever speaks ill of them and disparages them has disparaged the religion and departed from the ways of the messengers, and that is a sign of hypocrisy and discord.

¹⁷¹ The early Muslims (*Salaf*) are those who came before 400 AH, and the successors (*Khalaf*) are those who came after.

THE RANK OF SAINTHOOD



وَلَا نُفَضِّلُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْأَوْلِيَاءِ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَنَقُولُ نَبِيٌّ وَاحِدٌ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ جَمِيعِ الْأَوْلِيَاءِ.
وَنُؤْمِنُ بِمَا جَاءَ مِنْ كَرَامَاتِهِمْ، وَصَحَّ عَنِ الثَّقَاتِ مِنْ رِوَايَاتِهِمْ.

We do not consider any saint to be superior to any prophet. We say that a single prophet is better than all the saints. Furthermore, we believe in their miracles that reliable narrators have conveyed and transmitted in their authentic narrations.

A saint can never reach the rank of a prophet because [of the following reasons]:

1. a saint is a follower of a prophet, and a follower's degree is less than that of whom he is following;
2. every prophet is a saint, yet not every saint is a prophet. A prophet, therefore, combines both prophethood and sainthood and is thereby superior to a saint. This argument refutes the claim of the ignorant Sufis that sainthood is superior to prophethood;
3. the Prophet ﷺ said, 'The sun has not risen nor set over anyone after the prophets more virtuous than Abū Bakr.' This hadith necessarily entails Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's superiority ﷺ over all saints who are not prophets. Hence if al-Ṣiddīq is superior to the saints, then the [superiority of the] prophets [over them] is even more obvious.

Miracles of the saints

We believe in the miracles of the saints that have been [authentically] related, because the story of the throne of Bilqīs and the saying of that saint (Āṣaf ibn Barakhyā), who was one of Sulaymān's companions —he was not a prophet—has been mentioned in the Qur'an; in Allah Most High words: *One with whom was knowledge of the Book said: 'I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye.'* Then when he [Sulaymān] saw it placed firmly before him, he said: *'This is of the bounty of my Lord'* [Qur'an 27:40]. Moreover, there is the story of Maryam and the miracles that appeared through her, such as the [appearance of] winter provision in summer and summer provision in winter, and the appearance of the palm-tree in the desert and ripe dates falling from it. These are among the greatest miracles of Maryam. Allah Most High said: *Whenever Zakariyyā went into the sanctuary where she was, he found her supplied with provisions* [Qur'an 3:37]; *And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward yourself, you will cause ripe dates to fall upon you* [Qur'an 19:25]. Indeed, traditions and reports of the miracles of the righteous abound.

Every miracle that appears at the hand of a saint is [in reality] a prophet's miracle because Allah only honoured that saint with those miracles by the blessing of [his] emulating that prophet. Whatever [miracle] appears at his hand is therefore a proof of his prophet's veracity; hence a miracle can never contest a prophetic miracle (*mu'jizah*) but instead supports and attests to it. This is contrary to the claim of the Mu'tazilah that no distinction remains between a saint and prophet if we were to accept the possibility of a prophetic-type miracle appearing at the hand of a saint. We respond: a prophetic miracle accompanies the claim to prophethood, so if a saint were to claim prophethood, he would immediately become a disbeliever. A saint can also be aware or unaware of his sainthood, which is not the case with a prophet. Incidentally, a saint is permitted to reveal a miracle as a form of encouragement for one who seeks guidance [from him], not out of conceit and pride.

PORTENTS OF THE FINAL HOUR



وَنُؤْمِنُ بِخُرُوجِ الدَّجَالِ، وَنُزُولِ عِيسَى بْنِ مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ، وَنُؤْمِنُ بِطُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا،
وَنُؤْمِنُ بِخُرُوجِ دَابَّةِ الْأَرْضِ مِنْ مَوْضِعِهَا.

We believe in the emergence of the Antichrist and the descent of 'Īsā, the son of Maryam ﷺ, from heaven. Furthermore, we believe in the sun rising from the West and the emergence of the Earth's Beast from its lair

because the Prophet ﷺ foretold of these things, and he is truthful. Hence it is necessary to believe in what he prophesied. The hadiths about the above [portents] are profuse.

DIVINERS AND SOOTHSAYERS



وَلَا نُصَدِّقُ كَاهِنًا، وَلَا عَرَّافًا، وَلَا مَنْ يَدَّعِي شَيْئًا يُخَالِفُ¹⁷² الْكِتَابَ وَالسُّنَّةَ وَإِجْمَاعَ الْأُمَّةِ.

We do not believe any diviner, soothsayer, or anyone who claims something that opposes the Book, the Sunna and the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the nation.

As for rejecting the words of a diviner or soothsayer, then that is because the knowledge of the Unseen is something that Allah has exclusively reserved for Himself. No one is privy to it except through revelation to prophets chosen by Him Most High. Allah Most High said: *He discloses not His Unseen to anyone, except to a messenger whom He has chosen* [Qur'an 72:26-27]. Since neither diviners nor soothsayers are prophets, we do not believe them [in their claims]. It has been authentically related from the Prophet ﷺ [that he said], 'Whoever comes to a diviner or soothsayer and believes him has disbelieved in what has been revealed to Muhammad.'¹⁷³

Similarly, we do not believe anyone who claims something contrary to the Book of Allah, the Sunna of His Messenger and the

¹⁷² Another manuscript copy reads *يُخَالِفُ* ('in opposition').

¹⁷³ Narrated by al-Hākim, Ibn Mājah in the Book of Purification, Ahmad, and by Muslim in the Book of Greetings.

consensus of the nation, as these proofs are the sources of the sharia. Hence whoever believes something contrary to what is in these proofs of the sharia, then that [from him] is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance.

ADHERING TO THE CONGREGATION



وَبَرَى الْجَمَاعَةَ حَقًّا وَصَوَابًا، وَالْفُرْقَةَ زَيْنًا وَعَذَابًا.

We consider the Congregation to be true and correct, and schism to be deviance and [an occasion of] punishment.

He intended by the 'Congregation' what the Companions, their Successors and those with discretionary power to enact and dissolve a pact (*ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqad*),¹⁷⁴ in every age, adhered to, as it is an expression of consensus. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'My nation will not unite upon misguidance,'¹⁷⁵ and, 'Whatever the Muslims deem good is good in Allah's sight.' He intended by 'schism' opposition to consensus and what those with discretionary power to enact and dissolve unanimously agreed on. Opposition to consensus is 'deviance' from the right path, and an '[occasion of] punishment' because it leads to a painful torment [in the Afterlife]. Allah prohibited this when He said: *Be not like those who are divided among themselves and fall into disputation after receiving clear signs* [Qur'an 3:105]. Moreover, it is established in the reports from the Elect Prophet ﷺ [that he said], 'Whoever deviates from the

¹⁷⁴ In other words, scholars, leaders and dignitaries.

¹⁷⁵ Narrated with a similar wording by Abū Dāwūd in the Book of Tribulations and Battles, al-Tirmidhi in the Book of Tribulations, Ibn Mājah in the Book of Tribulations, Aḥmad in *Musnad al-qabā'il*, and al-Hākim in the Book of Knowledge.

Congregation by a hand-span has thrown off the noose of Islam from his neck,' and, 'Allah's hand [support] is over the Congregation. Whoever then dissents will dissent into Hell.'

وَوَيْدُنُ اللّٰهِ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ وَاحِدٌ، وَهُوَ دِينُ الْاِسْلَامِ، قَالَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى: ﴿اِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ﴾، وَ﴿وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا﴾.

The [true] religion of Allah in heaven and earth is one, namely the religion of Islam. Allah Most High said: *Indeed, the [true] religion with Allah is Islam* [Qur'an 3:19], and also: *and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion* [Qur'an 5:3].

This is so because all of the inhabitants of heaven and earth—namely the angels, jinn and humans—are obliged to affirm divine unity, believe in Allah and His names and attributes, and have conviction in what the prophets conveyed and the beginning of creation and its resurrection. All of the aforementioned is one; no morally responsible individual differs in that regard. Furthermore, no religion other than the religion of Islam will be accepted from anyone, as Allah Most High said: *And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him* [Qur'an 3:85]. This [verse] proves that the essence of the religion—namely Islam—is one; Allah Most High said: *Indeed, the [true] religion with Allah is Islam* [Qur'an 3:19]; *and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion* [Qur'an 5:3]. All morally responsible inhabitants of the heavens and earth are addressed with [the obligation to adopt] it; hence they do not differ with regard to the essence of the religion.

وَهُوَ

And it,

i.e. the religion of Allah,

بَيْنَ الْغُلُوِّ وَالتَّقْصِيرِ،

lies between extremism and neglect,

i.e. midway between them, as the inclination to one of the two ends is a departure from the straight path. Extremism is exceeding the limit, and neglect is falling short of the limit, both of which are blameworthy.

A slave should not exceed the limits his Master has defined for him nor neglect what He has enjoined upon him; the religion of Allah is precisely that.

وَبَيْنَ التَّنْظِيرِ وَالتَّمْطِيلِ،

[Similarly, this religion lies] between anthropomorphism and nullification,

which is to ascribe to Allah Most High the qualities of majesty and the attributes of perfection as stated by the Mighty Book and the traditions related from the Prophet ﷺ. This [ascription], however, must be without anthropomorphism, as is the doctrine of the anthropomorphists and the corporealists, for they likened the Creator to creation, even though there is nothing like unto Him; and without nullification, as is the doctrine of the Mu'tazilah, insomuch that they negated all attributes in reality from Allah Most High and made Him bereft of them.

Similarly, this religion lies

وَبَيْنَ الْجَبْرِ وَالْقَدَرِ،

between [believing in] determinism and absolute free will,

which is the way of orthodox Muslims, for they held that Allah Most High creates both the good and bad actions of slaves, but they acquire them. Such a stance is contrary to the doctrine of the Jabriyyah, as they claimed that slaves have no part to play in their actions, but rather are compelled [by Allah] to do them. Neither is it like the doctrine of the Qadariyyah, as they claimed that the works of slaves are created by them, not by Allah. Allah is exalted far above that!

Similarly, this religion lies

وَبَيْنَ الْأَمْنِ وَالْإِيَّاسِ.

between feeling secure and despair.

In other words, it is between fear and hope. This is so because feeling secure from [His] punishment implies a presumption that He is incapable of inflicting it, and entails opposition to the texts that speak of threat and severe torment for the profligates and evildoers. The contrary

doctrine is that of the Murji'ah, as they held that where there is faith, sins are harmless and that no believer will enter Hellfire.

In a similar vein, despairing of Allah's mercy implies a presumption that He is unable to forgive, and entails opposition to the texts that promise [reward in Paradise], intercession and pardon for believers. The contrary doctrine is that of the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah, as they held that faith is of no benefit without deeds; thus [according to them] if a major sinner dies unrepentant, he will eternally remain in Hellfire.

Both of these doctrines¹⁷⁶ are inconsistent with the Book and the Sunna. As for feeling secure, Allah Most High said: *But none feels secure from Allah's plan save folk that perish* [Qur'an 7:99]. As for despairing [of Allah's mercy], Allah Most High has said: *None despairs of Allah's mercy save the disbelieving folk* [Qur'an 12:87]. The traditions in that regard are also profuse.

Conclusion

فَهَذَا

The foregoing,

i.e. all of what we have stated from the beginning of the book up to here,

دِينَنَا وَاعْتِقَادُنَا ظَاهِرًا وَبَاطِنًا،

is our religion and belief, publically and privately,

because both the textual and rational proofs attest to the soundness of what we have stated. We are therefore obliged to believe in it, publically and privately, as inconsistency between what is public and private is a [distinguishing] characteristic of the Hypocrites, who are in the lowest abyss of Hellfire.

¹⁷⁶ In other words, that of the Murji'ah on one extreme and the Khawārij and Mu'tazilah on the other.

وَنَحْنُ بِرَأْيِهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْ كُلِّ مَنْ خَالَفَ الَّذِي ذَكَرْنَاهُ وَبَيَّنَّاهُ. وَنَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى أَنْ يُبَيِّنَنَا عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ، وَيُعْصِمَنَا مِنَ الْأَهْوَاءِ الْمُخْتَلِفَةِ، وَالْأَرْوَاحِ الْمُتَفَرِّقَةِ، وَالْمَذَاهِبِ الرَّوْدِيَّةِ، مِثْلَ الْمُسَبِّحَةِ، وَالْجَهْمِيَّةِ، وَالْجَبْرِيَّةِ، وَالْقَدَرِيَّةِ، وَغَيْرِهِمْ، مِنَ الَّذِينَ خَالَفُوا السُّنَّةَ وَالْجَمَاعَةَ، وَخَالَفُوا الضَّلَالَةَ، وَنَحْنُ مِنْهُمْ بِرَأْيِهِ، وَهُمْ حِنْدَنَا ضَلَالٌ وَأَزْدِيَاءُ.

We dissociate ourselves before Allah Most High from anyone who opposes what we have stated and elucidated. We ask Allah Most High to enable us to remain steadfast as believers and to seal our lives accordingly, and to protect us from the various heterodoxies, schismatic opinions and pernicious doctrines, such as [those of] the anthropomorphists, the Jahmiyyah,¹⁷⁷ the Jabriyyah, the Qadariyyah and others who opposed the Sunna and the main body of the community (*jama'ah*) and allied themselves with misguidance. We dissociate ourselves from them all, and we consider them misguided and destructive.

He only said, 'We dissociate ourselves before Allah from anyone who opposes what we have stated,' because the foundations of the religion that he stated from the beginning of the book till its end are the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ'ah, from the Companions and their Successors, established by textual and rational proofs, and the way to which the Prophet ﷺ and his companions adhered. Whoever opposes them is therefore merely adhering to the doctrine of the heretics and innovators; hence one must dissociate oneself from him.

He only asked for steadfastness in the religion of Islam because it is among the most important religious and worldly matters, and it is the practice of the prophets and the saints, and [because] what is paramount is having a good conclusion [to one's life]. He inevitably sought for his life to be sealed with faith so that he may attain success, salvation and [higher] ranks [in Paradise].

¹⁷⁷ A sect affiliated to Jahm ibn Safwân (d. 128/745). He believed that people were compelled to do actions and did not possess any free will, a doctrine he shared with the Jabriyyah. He also claimed the following: Paradise and Hellfire are not eternal and will perish; faith is mere recognition of Allah Most High; none other than Allah Most High has actions and actions are only metaphorically ascribed to Creation; and Allah Most High's knowledge is originated, among other aberrant doctrines.

He only sought protection from the various heterodoxies because the heretics opposed the clear proofs and the magnificent textual and rational arguments, and they held on to illusions and sophistry, which do not stand as proof, by their caprices and inclination to falsehood. It is necessary to dissociate from whatever entails enmity towards orthodoxy.

Consider the response of Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه when someone asked him, 'We have among us people who do not accept destiny (*qadar*).'¹⁷⁸ He replied, 'Convey to them that I dissociate myself from them!'¹⁷⁸

He then elucidated the various pernicious doctrines and schismatic views with his words 'such as [those of] the anthropomorphists, the Jahmiyyah, the Qadariyyah, the Jabriyyah and others,' like the various sects of the Shi'ites, the Karrāmiyyah, the Khawārij, the Murji'ah, and their ilk. He only began with the anthropomorphists because their belief is the most corrupt, as it consists of the personification of the All-Powerful Maker and their comparing Him to man. Imam Fakhr al-Din [al-Rāzī] (may Allah have mercy on him) said, 'An anthropomorphist has never worshipped Allah because he merely worships the form he conceives of in his imagination, but Allah is exalted above that.'

He thereafter cited the Jahmiyyah because of their vile doctrines that include the nullification of the Maker (Honoured is His Name), and their denial of the eternality of Paradise and Hellfire and their inhabitants, and their abiding in them forever. He then cited the Qadariyyah because they denied that He literally possesses the attributes of essence and action. He then said, 'We dissociate ourselves from them all, and we consider them misguided and destructive,' because of their opposition to the clear proofs, splendid verses and mass-transmitted reports.

Let this be the end of the book. All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. May Allah bless our master Muhammad and all of his folk and companions! Allah alone enables one to correctness, and to Him is our return and destination.

¹⁷⁸ Narrated by Muslim in the Book of Faith.

INDEX



- abad* (perpetuity), compared with
 azal (beginninglessness), 32–33
- abandonment (*khudhlan*), 142
- ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf, 154, 156
- ability to act, 142–43
- Abode of Peace, 62–63
- Abū Bakr al Ṣiddīq, 153–56
- Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu‘mān ibn Thābit
 - encounter with atheists, 15
 - status of, 1–5
- Abū Nuwwās, 16
- Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāh, 156
- Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qub ibn
 - Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, 2
- acquisition of actions, 144–45
 - actions
 - ability accompanying, 142–43
 - and faith, 110–11
 - as created and acquired, 144–45
 - as not part of reality of faith, 110
 - judged by their endings, 78
 - not hidden from Allah, 40
- Ādam, 11, 74–75
- affāk* (sinful fabricator), 88
- aḥad*, compared with *wāḥid*, 8–9
- Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, proof for
 - existence of Allah, 16
- Aḥraman, 18
- ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib
 - Caliphate of, 153–56
 - extremism in loving or
 hating, avoiding, 151
- ‘Alī ibn Zayd, 5
- Allah
 - as answering supplications, 147
 - as living, 24–26
 - attribute of creating, 85–88
 - attributes of (*See* attributes)
 - beatific vision of, 55ff
 - debating about essence of, as
 blameworthy, 96–97
 - deducing existence of, 11
 - dissimilarity to creation, 22–24
 - divine decree, 76–81
 - does not cease to exist, 20–21
 - eternality of, 19–20
 - forgiveness of, 116
 - names and attributes of, 29–37
 - nothing like unto Hīm, 65–66
 - obeying, as obligatory, 40
 - obligation to know,
 disagreement on, 9–12
 - oneness of. *See* Divine unity
 - perpetuity of, 20
 - self-subsistence of, 26–28
 - will of, 21–22
 - wrath and pleasure of, 149
- alms, in the name of the
 - deceased, 146–48
- angels
 - belief in, 92–93
 - faith of, 112–13
 - Honourable Scribes, 130–31
- anthropomorphism
 - as form of polytheism, 18–19
 - as most corrupt form of
 deviance, 169
 - avoiding, 166
 - in attributing directionality
 to Allah, 65–66
 - in literal interpretation
 of texts, 58, 64

- negation of doctrine of, 23
- Antichrist, 161
- apparent ability, 142
- 'aqidah*. *See* creed
- 'Arsh* (Throne of Allah), 89–90
- Āṣaf ibn Barakhyā, 160
- ascension of the Prophet, 68–70
- Ash'ari school
- as part of Ahl al-Sunnah
 - wa al-Jamā'ah, xx
- on attributes of actions, 34–35, 37, 86
- on being obliged beyond
 - one's strength, 143
- on those who have not
 - received the message, 7
- atheism, early arguments against, 14–15
- athīm* (profligate sinner), 88
- attributes of actions, 29, 34–35, 37, 86
- attributes of Allah
 - Creating, 85–88
 - creation in utter neediness, 36–37
 - eternality of, 32–33
 - not contingent on creation, 33–35
 - nothing like unto Him, 37
 - Omnipotence, 35
 - types of, 29–32
 - volition, 41–44
- awliya'* Allah (friends of Allah), 80
- azal* (beginninglessness), compared
 - with *abad* (perpetuity), 32–33
- Al-Azhari, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, 9

- Bal'am ibn Bā'ūrā, 104–105
- Basin of the Prophet, 71–73
- Beast of the earth, 161
- beatific vision
 - described, 55–57
 - in Abode of Peace, 62–63
- beginninglessness (*azal*), compared
 - with perpetuity (*abad*), 32–33
- being, possible (*mumkin*) and
 - necessary (*wajib*), 11
- believers
 - adhering to the congregation
 - of, 164–69
 - as friends of Allah, 114
 - beatific vision of Allah, 55–56
 - between fear and hope, 107
 - declaring those of qibla as, 94–95
 - intercession for, 72–73
 - major sins and belief, 101–103
 - meaning of faith, 109–111
 - who commit major sin,
 - fate of, 115–19
 - See also* Muslims.
- Bilqīs, 160
- blind following (*taqlid*), 43
- Books, the, belief in, 92–93
- Bridge, the, 137
- Burāq, 69

- Caliphate, 153–55
- charity, in the name of the
 - deceased, 146–48
- Christianity
 - divinity of 'Isā in, 46
 - negation of son of God doctrine, 23
- command of Allah, 43
- Companions
 - loving, 150–52, 157
 - ten assured Paradise, 154, 156
- congregation of Muslims
 - adhering to, 164–69
 - avoiding opposition to, 100
- congregational prayer, behind
 - the sinful, as valid, 120
- contemplation, role in
 - knowing Allah, 10–11
- corporealists (*mujassimah*), 23
- covenant of Adam and his
 - progeny, 74–75
- creation, actions of, not
 - hidden from Allah, 40
- creation
 - Allah brings death without fear, 27
 - Allah creates without need, 26–27
 - Allah's attribute of creating
 - (*takwīn*), 85–88
 - Allah's dissimilarity from, 22–24
 - in utter neediness of Allah, 36–37

- preordination of, 38–39
- resurrection of, 27–28
- signs of Allah in, 11
- creed
 - definition of term '*aqidah*', 2
 - '*ilm al-kalām*', 6
- Day of Resurrection, 135–38
 - beatific vision of Allah on, 56–57
 - portents of, 161
 - Prophet Muhammad ﷺ on, 48
 - death, supplication for the
 - deceased, 146–48
 - debating, as blameworthy, 96–97
 - deduction, role in knowing
 - Allah, 10–11
 - despair, avoiding, 106
 - destiny. *See* preordination
 - determinism, 166
 - directionality, 65–66
 - disbelief
 - and major sins, 101–103
 - as rejection of faith, 107–108
 - believing in diviners and soothsayers, 162–63
 - claiming independence from
 - Allah as, 148
 - danger of pursuing
 - ambiguous matters, 60
 - punishment in grave, 134
 - disobedience (to Allah),
 - as prohibited, 40
 - dissent, 123–26
 - Divine unity
 - aḥad* and *wāḥid*, distinction
 - between terms, 8–9
 - as reason why prophets sent, 7
 - meaning of, 9
 - proof of, 17–19
 - diviners, 162–63
 - du'ā'*. *See* supplications
 - dualism, 18
 - enablement (*tawfiq*), 142
 - eternality of Allah, 19–20
 - extremism, 165
 - faith
 - does not increase or decrease, 112–14
 - effect of sin on, 103
 - essence of, 114
 - loving Companions as part of, 150
 - meaning of, 109–111
 - rejection and denial of, 107–108
 - resides in heart, 8
 - Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī, 4, 86, 110
 - faqīh*, defined, 3
 - fear, 106–107, 166
 - felicity, 78
 - figurative interpretation,
 - avoiding, 58, 61
 - use of, among later Muslims, 67
 - Final Hour, portents of, 161
 - fiqh*, defined, 3–4
 - footstool of Allah (*Kursī*), 89–90
 - footwear, wiping over, 127
 - free will
 - ability to act, 142–43
 - actions, as created and
 - acquired, 144–45
 - balance in beliefs regarding, 166
 - friends of Allah, 80, 159–60
 - funeral prayers, for the sinful, 121
 - al-Ghazālī, 7
 - gnosis, 10
 - governance, rebelling against
 - leaders, 123–26
 - grave, the, 132–34
 - guardian angels, 130–31
 - Hafṣ ibn Ghiyāth, 5
 - Hajj, 128–29
 - Hanbalī school, 52
 - Hārūn al-Rashīd, 16
 - al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, 75
 - Ḥashawīyyah, 9, 14
 - heart, as seat of faith, 8
 - Heaven. *See* paradise.

- Hellfire, 139–41
 Bridge over, 137
 declaring someone as person of, avoiding, 121
 hypocrites in, 167
 preordination of those who will enter, 76–77, 83, 140
 those brought forth from, 118
 hidden ability, 142
 Honourable Scribes, 130–31
 hope, 103–104, 107, 166
 horizons, signs of Allah in, 11
 Husayn ibn Hurayth, 4
 hypocrisy
 as faith on tongue alone, 8
 as nullifying actions, 104
 avoiding accusing others of, 121
 delving into disputes between Companions as, 152
 dissociating from family of Prophet as sign of, 157
 expressing faith on tongue only as, 8
 in delving into unseen matters, 103
 inconsistency between private and public life, 167
 punishment for, in grave, 134
 speaking ill of scholars as sign of, 158

 Ibn 'Umar, 169
 Ibrāhīm
 as friend of Allah, 91
 deducing existence of Allah, 11, 12
 surrender of, to Allah, 63–64
ilhām, 10
ilm al-kalām, 6. *See also* creed.
īmān. *See* faith
 Infallible Imam in Ismā'īlī theology, 10
 innovation, 125
 intellect, cannot comprehend
 beatific vision, 62–63
 intercession of the Prophet, 71–73
 'Isā ibn Maryam, 46, 161
 Islam
 adhering to the congregation, 164–69
 major sins and belief, 101–103, 107–108
 steadfastness in, till death, 119
 submission, as grounding for, 58–59
 See also Muslims; believers.
 Ismā'īlī, 10

 Jabriyyah (Compulsionists), 144, 166, 168
 Ja'far al-Sādiq, 15
 Jahmiyyah, 168
 Jibrīl
 asking the Prophet about faith, 111
 form of, 69–70
 taught the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, 99
 jihad, 128–29

 al-Ka'bi, 21
 al-Karkhi, Abū al-Hasan, 127
 Karrāmiyyah, 52
 al Kawthar, 71
 Khawārij
 hatred of 'Aḥ, 151
 on punishment of sinners, 117
 on sin and disbelief, 101–103
khidhlān (abandonment), 142
 knowledge
 ambiguous matters, 126
 of Allah, disagreement on, 9–12
 two types of, 80–81
 understanding one's limits, 59–60
Kursī (footstool of Allah), 89–90

 life of Allah, 24–26
 lifespan, as appointed, 39–40
 light, Qur'an as, 49–50
 literalism, 58, 66

madhhab, defined, 3
 major sins
 do not make one a disbeliever, 101–103

fate of those who engage in, 115–19
 Mālik ibn Anas, Imam
 on Abū Ḥanīfah, 4–5
 on proof of Allah's existence, 16
 mankind, covenant with Allah, 74–75
 Maryam, 160
 al-Māturīdī, Shaykh Abū Maṣṣūr, 109
 mercy of Allah, 140, 167
 mind, cannot comprehend

 beatific vision, 62–63
 miracles of saints, 160
 monarchy, 154
 moral responsibility (*taklīf*), 143
 Mothers of the Believers, 157
muḥassimah (corporealists), 23.

See also anthropomorphism
mu'jizāt (prophetic miracles), 160
 Munkar and Nakir, 132–33
 Muṣṭafāh, 103, 117, 167, 169
 Mūsā

 as addressed by Allah, 91
 asking to see Allah, 56
 use of Ibrāhīm's proofs, 12–13

Muslims
 accusing of disbelief, as
 impermissible, 101–108
 adhering to the congregation
 of, 164–69
 impermissibility of waging
 war against, 122
 rebellious against leaders, as
 impermissible, 123–26
 status of, 120–22
 who commit major sin,
 fate of, 115–19

See also believers

Mu'tazilah
 as negating attributes of Allah, 166
 belief regarding createdness
 of the Qur'an, 100
 interpretation of beatific
 vision, 57–58, 63–64
 on attributes of actions of Allah, 34
 on attributes and essence of Allah, 31
 on miracles of saints, 160

 on punishment of sinners, 117
 on those who commit a
 major sin, 102
 position of obligation on Allah
 to reward good, 140
 position on Allah acting in
 interest of people, 42
 position on guidance, 8
 position on the Qur'an, 53
 position on will of Allah, 21–22
 view on action as within
 power of slave, 143
 view on prayers as ineffectual, 147
 view on slaves creating actions, 144
 mutual hindrance, proof of, 17

al-Naḍr ibn Shumayl, 4
 Nakir, and Munkar, 132–33
 names of Allah, 29–37
 Al-Nasafi, Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar, 2, 23
 al-Nazzām, 22
 necessary (*wājib*) being, 11
 night journey of the Prophet, 68–70
 Nūḥ, 12
 Numrūd, 12

obedience (to Allah), as commanded, 40
 Omnipotence of Allah, 35
 Oneness of God. *See* Divine unity
 oppression, 125–26

Paradise, 139–41
 beatific vision of Allah, 55–57,
 62–63
 declaring someone as person
 of, avoiding, 121
 preordination of those who
 will enter, 76–77, 83, 140
 ten Companions assured, 154, 156
 Peace, Abode of, 62–63
 Pen, the, 82–83
 perpetuity of Allah, 20
 plan (*makr*) of Allah, 106
 pleasure of Allah, 149
 polytheism, 18

- portents of the Final Hour, 161
- possible (*mumkin*) being, 11
- prayer
 - behind the sinful, as valid, 120
 - for the deceased, 146–48
- preordination, 76–81
 - actions, not hidden from Allah, 40
 - averting decree of Allah,
 - as impossible, 43
 - delving into, avoiding, 79–80
 - lifespan, 38–40
 - obedience to Allah, 40
 - Tablet and Pen, 82–83
 - volition of Allah, 41–44
- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
 - anger of at those who debate, 97
 - as Seal of the Prophets, 46–47
 - as taught the Qur'an, 99
 - ascension and night
 - journey of, 68–70
 - Basin of, 71–73
 - belief in prophethood of, 45–46
 - books with names of inhabitants
 - of Paradise and Hell, 83
 - intercession of, 71–73
 - loving Companions of, 150–52, 157
 - no prophet after, 48
 - on punishment of major
 - sinner, 118–19
 - on rightly-guided Caliphate, 154
 - on torment of the graves, 133
 - revelation of the Qur'an to, 52
 - Sunnah of, defined, 2–3
 - universality of message of, 49–50
 - use of proofs of divine unity, 13
 - virtues and distinctions of, 47–48
 - wives of, honouring, 157
- prophetic miracle (*mu'jizah*), 160
- prophets, belief in, 92–93
- qadar. *See* preordination
- Qadariyyah, 168
- qibla, declaring as Muslims
 - those who face, 94–95
- Qur'an,
 - arguing about, prohibition
 - of, 98–100
 - as light, 49–50
 - as Word of Allah, 53–54
 - ascension of the Prophet, 68–70
 - attributes of Allah's essence,
 - evidence of in, 29–30
 - beatific vision of Allah, 56
 - command of Allah, 43
 - conjoining of action and
 - faith, 110–11
 - discursive proofs of divine
 - unity, 13–14
 - entirety of, as transmitted, 111
 - eternality of, 51–54
 - Ḥanbalī position on, 52
 - Karrāmīyah doctrine of, 52
 - life of Allah, affirmed in, 24
 - on acquisition of actions, 145
 - on Allah answering
 - supplications, 147
 - on Allah creating actions
 - of slaves, 144
 - on hajj, 128
 - on Islam, 165
 - on major sins and belief, 102
 - on obeying leaders, 123
 - on power of Allah to
 - resurrect the dead, 28
 - on predestination of lifespan, 39
 - on Prophet Muhammad, 46
 - on the Companions, 150
 - on the Scales, 138
 - on the throne of Bīlqīs, 160
 - on unity, 164
 - on wrath and pleasure of Allah, 149
 - position of Mu'tazilī on, 53
 - resurrection of the dead, 135–37
 - universality of message of, 49–50
 - volition of Allah, 41–43
- Rāfiḍah, 95, 101, 151
- al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, 110, 169
- rebellion, 123–26
- resurrection, 27–28, 135–38

revelation

belief in, 92–93

of the Qur'an, 52

Rightly-Guided Caliphs, 153–55

Sacred Law, 111

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqās, 154, 156

Sa'īd ibn Zayd, 156

sainthood, 159–60

al-Sanūsī, Abū 'Abd-Allāh, 7

Scales, the, 137

scholars, speaking well of, 158

Seal of the Prophets, 46–47

sectarianism, 125

self-subsistence of Allah, 26–28

al-Shāfi'ī, Imam

on Abū Ḥanīfah, 4

on impiety and faith, 110

on proof of Allah's existence, 15–16

position on action and faith, 110

Shams al-A'imma, 110

al-Shaybānī, Muḥammad

ibn al-Ḥasan, 2

Shī'ah Islam. *See* RāfiḍahShirk. *See* polytheism

Ṣifāt al-aḥdāl (attributes of

Allah's actions), 29

Ṣifāt al-dhāt (attributes of

Allah's essence), 29

sinners

asking forgiveness for, 105

intercession for, 73

praying behind, as valid, 120

soothsayers, 162–63

soul, signs of existence of Allah, 11

Sufism, on knowing Allah, 10

Sulaymān, 160

sun, rising from West, 161

Sunnah

defined, 2–3

following, 124

supplications, benefitting the

deceased, 146–48

Tablet, Preserved, 82–83. *See**also* preordination*taklīf* (moral responsibility), 143*takwīn* (attribute of creating), 85–88

Ṭalḥah, 154, 156

taqlīd (blind following), 43*tawfiq* (enablement), 142*tawhīd*. *See* Divine unity

Throne of Allah ('Arsh), 89–90

torment of the graves, 132–34

treachery, 125–26

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 153–56

unseen, knowledge of, 81, 162–63

'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, 133, 153–56

volition of Allah, 41–44

wāḥid, compared with *aḥad*, 8–9

Wakī, 4

warfare, against Muslims, as

impermissible, 122

will of Allah, 21–22

wives of the Prophet, 157

wrath of Allah, 149

Yazdān, 18

Yūsuf, 119

Zakariyyā, 160

Zoroastrianism, 18

al-Zubayr, 154, 156



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